

Mindam Sharing Education for Identity Building of the Korean-American Christians

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ABSTRACT

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The intention of this project is to help Korean Americans to create a positive Korean-American identity in the United States through *mindam* sharing education. There are three major pedagogical purposes in the development of this project. The first is to inform Korean Americans of their immigration history and their painful life experiences in the United States; in short, to make Korean Americans aware of their realities in the United States and look back on their history. The next purpose is to provide them with a positive theological understanding of their realities and experiences. In this new theological formation, the painful experiences of Korean Americans will be interpreted as the wilderness experience. However, in this project, the wilderness is not always understood in negative ways such as thirst, hunger, pain, discrimination, injustice, and death. Rather it is interpreted as a place of transformation through the *han* sublimation process. In the midst of the economic and political injustice and racial discrimination in American society, Korean Americans will never give up their lives in the wilderness, but they will realize that they are called to the wilderness to encounter God. The last purpose is to apply the traditional mindam sharing to Korean-American church education. This mindam sharing education will enable Korean Americans to love their hanful realities, to sublimate their *han*, and to create a positive Korean-American identity in the United States. At the end of this project, in order to show Korean-American church educators

how mindam sharing education is exercised in the church setting, an educational curriculum of mindam sharing education is provided.

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INTRODUCTION

Many modern scholars point out that a person with a strong ethnic sense of belonging manages a very positive life style in a foreign land. Milton M. Gordon categorizes the American history into three models: the Anglo-conformity, melting pot, and cultural pluralism. The Anglo-conformity model created by the Anglo Saxons demands rightness, law, and people's government. The melting pot model preferred by the immigrants from Germany, Sweden, France, and other northern European countries asks for a cultural assimilation. The cultural pluralism model preferred by later immigrants respects different ethnic values and identities.¹

On the other hand, Yong Soo Hyun, having much interest in religious education for Korean Americans, has invested much of his time in the study of "Koreanness" in the U.S.A.. According to Hyun, there are four groups of Korean Americans in the U.S.A.. The first group are traditionalists who refuse to be assimilated with Americanism. The second group are bi-culturalists who adopt Korean culture and American culture without difficulties. The third group are neo-Koreans who being uncomfortable with the two cultures have created a new Korean-American culture, the so called "neo-Korean culture." The last group are assimilationists or Americanized Koreans who reject the traditional Korean culture and adopt only the American culture and values. After studying the lives of the four groups, Hyun finally has came to the conclusion that the traditionalists

¹ Milton M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 98.

(traditional Koreans) manage the most positive life style and faithful religiosity in the U.S.A.²

Furthermore, like the scholars mentioned above, many other prominent Asian Pacific scholars have continuously released a very similar viewpoint of the relationship between an ethnic identity and religiosity. The common agreement among those scholars is that each ethnicity is created equally by God. Therefore, these scholars never accept the superiority of one particular ethnic group and norm. Rather they request equality and respect for each ethnicity. Moreover, they refuse the Anglo-conformity and melting pot models seeking for superior norm(s) of one ethnic group or a few powerful ethnic groups and demanding sacrifices from the other minor ethnic groups.

Today is a pluralistic world in which many voices are spoken and heard. Christianity is not exempt from the impact of pluralism. For the creative future of the Korean church, I pull out two positive points from the pluralism in Christianity. The first point is an equality among all ethnic groups. The history and culture of each ethnicity are respected and preserved in pluralistic Christianity because they become the basis of each other's faith and theology. In other words, there exists no supreme faith and theology for all ethnic groups in Christianity. Therefore, no absolutely dominant voice and norm can ever be accepted in Christianity. Each ethnicity is allowed to speak with its own voice. The second productive point is the rediscovery of God's purpose among all ethnic groups. Each ethnicity has a sole purpose of being in this world. This purpose is a reason to exist in this pluralistic world. It is true that there is only one Christianity, but there are different

² Yong-Soo Hyun, Culture and Religious Education: Direction for the Religious Education of Korean-American 2nd Generations (Seoul: Qum-Ran Publishing, 1993), 166.

ethnic Christians in it. Therefore, the journey of each ethnic group to fulfill its own purpose of being should be respected.

In this sense, Korean-American Christians, a small portion of the Asian ethnic group, have a purpose of being in the American society. Therefore, it is demanded of Korean-American Christians to realize who they are and what purpose of being they have in this world. God asks Korean-American Christians to be *Korean-American* Christians. I put a strong emphasis on the adjective *Korean-American*. The Korean-American Christians are neither Koreans nor Americans. They are the Korean Americans who live in the U.S.A. keeping their Korean heritage and mind. They are the Korean Americans who have pride in their Korean blood, tradition, and history. They are also the Korean Americans who thank God for creating them Korean Americans and who know the purpose of their being in the American society. Finally, they are not only the Korean Americans who have pride in their stories, but also the Korean Americans who share theirs with other ethnic groups.

Then how do Korean Americans have Korean-mindedness? In other words, how can the Korean church provide education in *Koreanization* for Korean-American Christians? To adopt mindam sharing into Korean-American Christian education, I believe, is the best educational approach for this task. Everybody likes stories, no matter what age group or gender a person belongs to. If the story is related to a person, it is more enjoyable for everyone to hear. As a story is a reflection of a life experience, mindam is the reflections of the life experiences of Korean people. Korean people named their stories *mindam* (*min* means *minjung* or people; *dam* a story), put philosophy, ethics, and wisdom into it, and bequeathed it to their children. Mindam itself means something

for not only Korean Christian education in Korea but also Korean-American Christian education in the United States. Therefore, the thesis for this project is: **Mindam sharing education builds a positive Korean-American identity in the minds of Korean Americans in the United States.**

In the first chapter, I will discuss the two parts of Korean-American immigration history from 1902 to 1945 and from 1946 to 1994. The history is mentioned in relation to the motivations of Korean emigration from Korea to the United States and in relation to the involvement of the Korean-American church in the development of the immigration history. The second chapter will give a detailed description of the “hanful” life experiences and styles of the Korean Americans in the discriminatory American society after 1965. There are two tasks in this chapter. The first is to inform how Korean Americans struggle for survival and for their identity in the American society; the second is to examine how the church responds to their cries. This chapter will conclude that the Korean-American church is occupied with Americanism and has failed to help the Korean-American Christians to build their positive identity in the United States. In the third chapter, a new theological understanding of the lives of the enhanced (hanful) Korean Americans and their identity crisis in the United States will be introduced. The new theology, named the theology of Arirang-gogae, will help the Korean Americans to overcome their suffering and identity crisis. Based on the new theological understanding in the previous chapter, the fourth chapter will introduce a new educational theory, the so called mindam sharing education, to the Korean-American church. The mindam applied in the new educational approach is not about the stories of heroes and heroines, but the stories of painful or hanful experiences of the Koreans/ Korean Americans. In the last

chapter, some practical examples of mindam sharing education in relation to the Los Angeles Riot of 1992 will be presented to the Korean-American victims of the riot and to the Korean-American church educators who are expecting new theological and educational approaches for the identity crisis of their church members.

CHAPTER 1

Korean-American Immigration and the Church

The introduction of the Korean-American immigration history in this chapter has a threefold purpose: the first is to tell the context and reason for a strong emigration wave which took place in the first immigration period (1902-1945) in Korea; the second is to mention the contribution of Christianity to the motivations of Korean immigration to the United States; and the last is speak of the relationship between the church and the lives of the first Korean-American immigrants in Hawaii. In order to make it easier for the reader to understand the history and the church, the history has been cut in half: the first part of the history begins in 1902 and ends in 1945; the second part of it starts in 1946 and continues to the present.¹ I will divide this history into two parts because of the dynamic relationship between the church and the history (or the Korean immigrants in the United States).

Korean Americans in the First Immigration Period (1902-1945)

Situation of Korea before the First Korean-American Immigration Period

At least two things must be carefully studied by anyone who wishes to understand another's immigration history. The first is the inside and outside situation of the country from which one emigrates; the other is at least the inside atmosphere of the country to which one immigrates. The careful study of general situations of the emigrating and immigrating countries is not only to explain the motivations of one's emigration and

¹ Some historians divide the second half of the Korean immigrant history into two parts: the “post-war period” of Korean immigrants to the United States (from 1946 to 1964); and the “new immigrant era” of Koreans to the United States (from 1965 to the

immigration but also to acknowledge one's vision of the country of immigration. In other words, the inside and outside situations of the immigrant's home country affects the formation of the immigrant's vision of the place of immigration. In this sense, not only the inside and outside situations of Korea but also the inside situation of the United States particularly Hawaii must be carefully examined in order to understand the motivations of Korean immigration to the United States. This chapter, therefore, will look into the motivations of the first Korean-American emigration not only in relation to the economic and political situations of Korea in the period between the 1870s and the 1940s but also in relation to the atmosphere of Hawaii, where the first official Korean-American immigration took place.

The Inside Situation of Korea. At the end of Chosun, the previous name of Korea, the country went to rack and ruin because of *Sedo* politics in which political and economic powers were taken and controlled by small political groups, especially by the queen's family members such as Andong's Kim and Pungyang's Cho. The political figures created factions and restrained each other. If one faction gained power, the faction destroyed the opponent factions as well as the national projects planned by the previous political faction. Therefore, there was no consistency of politics and no promise for public peace. The *Sedo* system also encouraged the local government officers to exploit the people. The officials increased taxes to gain money for themselves.

The people also suffered from discrimination under the *yangban* oriented society. Yangbans were those persons who were benefited by acquiring all preferences in

present). More explanations of this immigration period will be mentioned later in this chapter.

economic and political positions in the society. There were two ways to be granted yangban status. The first is to inherit the status from ancestors; the other is to obtain it by completing a distinguished military service or providing economic assistance to the government. Yangbans, granted privilege to obtain political and economic benefits, had the opportunity to become nobility and landlords. Therefore, this status itself represented success and honor in the society. Of course, it does not mean that all yangbans maintained economic and political power. Some lost their power and withdrew themselves to the countryside. However, they still kept the yangban status despite their economic and political collapse. They longed to regain power some day. On the other hand, the ordinary people, especially farmers who were economically and politically powerless, lost their farms and became hired farm laborers or slaves in the worst situation. To make things worse, the lower people suffered from natural disasters such as famines and disease in those days.

The corruption of political and yangban systems frequently brought the people to rebellions. In most cases, people went to government offices and asked for corrections at first. However, their appeals were not taken seriously by the government. They got angry and rebelled against the government. The outstanding examples are the Hong Kyungnae's revolt under the reign of King Sunjo and the Chinju's rebellion under the reign of King Choljong.

As the society fell into a state of confusion, the people came to seek a new religion. It is very natural that when people experience difficult times, they become diligent in seeking peace of mind from religion. The Korean people, however, did not turn their minds back to Buddhism and Confucianism from which they used to find peace of

mind. These religions no longer attracted the people since the religious leaders acted as the politicians' tools against the people. Therefore, the people seeking a new religion were attracted to *Tonghakkyo*² (called *Tonghak*, meaning a religion created on the base of Eastern thought) and Christianity (called *Seoyangkyo*,³ meaning a Western religion).

The Outside Situation of Korea. Chosun, "the Hermit Kingdom," used to practice a closed door policy as it was confronted by the pressure to open to foreigners. However, despite foreign pressure, its closed door policy was continued and rather maximized during the days of Hungson Taewongun, the Regent, who helped the very young King Kojong. This policy was welcomed by the people in general because, they thought, the pressure of foreigners was so rude and aggressive. Therefore, under the leadership of Hungson Taewongun, the Chosun government and the people had fought and defeated the

² *Tonghakko*, was created by Choe Che-u, a Kyungju yangban who had lost his economic and political power. "As a belief based on a strong sense of nationalism, [Tonghak signifies] its stand against [Seoyangkyo] or Catholicism. Choe Che-u combined the three thoughts of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The basic idea of Tonghak is that human minds are heavenly minds; that is, heaven exists in the mind of humans. Tonghak propagated the ideas of human salvation and equality, along with promised blessings on earth, and proposed the ideas of national peace, salvation of mankind, and eternal youth. Tonghak is close to the theories of metaphysics, and it emphasizes the end of the world and the creation of a new heaven and earth. . . . [This religion] spread rapidly in the rural communities. The government charged Tonghak with heresy and executed Choe Che-u, its founder for spreading heresy. However, we can still find the pieces of Christian influence in the formation of Tonghak: 1) 'Heaven exists in human'; 2) the term 'human salvation'; 3) the anticipation of a new heaven and earth; 4) the equality of all." Hankooksa [History of Korea] (Seoul: Seoul University, 1992), 177-78.

³ "[B]ecause Christianity was accompanied by Western scientific knowledge and thought, Koreans called it the *soehag* (Western learning) movement." Illsoo Kim, "Organizational Patterns of Korean-American Methodist Churches: Denominationalism and Personal Community," in Rethinking Methodist History: A Bicentennial Historical Consultation, eds. Russell E. Richey and Kenneth E. Rowe (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1985), 229.

foreign warships and military powers. They defeated the French army in 1866, and the United States army twice in 1871.

However, after the resignation of Hunson Taewongun, Chosun slowly turned to an open door policy. Unfortunately, in 1876 before completely prepared for free trade, Chosun opened its ports to Japan whose army attacked Kanghwa Island and demanded the opening of ports. The government immediately signed treaties with various countries and opened other ports to the Western countries as soon as it made a concession to the demand of Japan. Chosun also established a diplomatic and trade relationship with the United States and signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce (so called the Chemulpo Treaty) in 1882. After the Chosun government signed a treaty with the United States, it began to send diplomats, students, and merchants (sometimes political refugees) to the United States. However, there were very few persons.

As time went by, the surrounding nations of Chosun were busy taking economic and political control in the country. The worst nation, of course, was Japan. Chosun was demanded to change its economic and political structures, modeling them after Japanese-like systems. The Chosun government could not reject the demand and immediately carried out radical reformation as demanded by Japan. The radical change was called “Kap-o Reform.” However, the people of Chosun, of course, did not approve of the compulsory reform and rose against it. Some officials and the common people called for national self reliance, independence, and free rights. With this kind of atmosphere of the Independence Movement, King Kojong renamed Chosen to Taehancheguk (Taehan Empire) and declared its self-independence in 1897. However, Japan did not permit the

declamation, continued to take away the people's freedom of speech, press, and assembly, and finally fully colonized the nation in 1910.

Situation of the Hawaiian Islands. It is too much to talk about the whole situation of the United States in this project. Also the major living place for Korean Americans was the Hawaiian islands during the first immigration period. Therefore, this project will limit its concern only to the situation of the Hawaiian Islands in which the first official Korean immigration to the United States took place. In the beginning period of the twentieth century, the owners of the Hawaiian sugar plantations needed laborers and recruited laborers from various countries. There were already over 400,000 laborers recruited from around the world to the plantations by the 1930s.⁴ The Hawaiian Planter's Association sent Charles R. Bishop, president of the association, to Korea and concluded a treaty of labor with the Korean government on May 9, 1902.⁵

The recruitment of various races from around the world was motivated by two reasons: the first was to prevent unionization among a large unified work force. The other was to promote competition between the different ethnic immigrant workers. The best example of this can be found in the intentional recruitment of Korean laborers to the plantations. The plantation owners brought Korean laborers to the plantations in order restrain Japanese Americans who had already immigrated to Hawaii and organized a labor union.⁶ Indeed, the Japanese-American laborers had conducted thirty-four strikes in

⁴ Edward Taehan Chang and Janet Chunghee Kim, Following the Footsteps of Korean Americans (Los Angeles: Pacific Institute for Peacemaking, 1995), 29.

⁵ John K. Hyun, Korean Immigrants History (Seoul: Sam-Wha, 1976), cited in Hyun, 31.

⁶ Chang and Kim, 29.

Hawaiian plantation in the years of 1902-1905.⁷ As the plantation owners had expected, some of the Korean Americans were willing to play their role against the Japanese laborer union because to those Korean Americans such an action was considered revenge against Japan's colonization of Korea. The total numbers of Korean immigrants in the years of 1902-1905 were 7,226. However, Korean immigration to Hawaii suddenly stopped after Korea was officially merged into Japan in 1910. There was no reason for the Japanese government to let Korean laborers migrate to other countries, especially to Hawaiian plantations where Japanese laborers became the targets of revenge by Koreans.

In many cases, Korean-American immigration to the United States was stimulated by the influences of American Christian missionaries in Korea. There were already a lot of American missionaries (174 in 1904 and 205 in 1909) sent by fourteen American denominations to spread Christian propaganda in Korea. The American missionaries played an active role in recruiting Korean laborers for the Hawaiian plantations. The recruitment, however, was not easy in Korea because Confucian teachings strongly discouraged the people's migration from their ancestral heritage.⁸ In the Confucian conservative society, it was sinful for descendants to leave the shrines of their ancestral temples and cemeteries. What made the conservative Confucian Koreans leave their ancestral restraints? It was possibly the American missionaries' teaching that the salvation of humanity could occur only through the blood of Jesus Christ but not through ancestral worship practices. That may be why 40 percent of Korean immigrants in the first

⁷ Joan May Cordova, "Historical and Cultural Context," in Asian Pacific American Youth Ministry: Planning Helps, and Programs, ed. Donald Ng (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988), 28.

⁸ Cordova, 28.

immigration period were Christian.⁹ Moreover, the American missionaries implanted in the minds of Korean Christians that Hawaii was the land of paradise where fine weather, very high salary, and educational and religious opportunities were promised to all people regardless of sex, age, and race.¹⁰

The Immigrants Relationship with the Church after Landing in the Hawaiian Islands

Korean Immigration Between 1902 and 1945. Most Korean-American immigrants in the years 1902-1905 were young, healthy and hard working laborers. There were 6,048 males, 637 females, and 541 children.¹¹ The majority of the first immigration group were farmers in Korea. Therefore, cultivating sugar in the different place was not strange for them. However, the tropical Hawaiian weather was not pleasant to the immigrants who were accustomed to four clear seasonal changes. Their daily assignments were hard on the plantations.¹² Samuel Lee describes their difficult lives in Hawaii as follows: "As soon

⁹ Warren Won Yong Kim, Koreans in America (Seoul: Po Chin Chai, 1971), cited in Hyun, 32.

¹⁰ Chang and Kim, 21-23.

¹¹ Chang and Kim, 11.

¹² "Most of the migrants were young men. Since many were too poor to afford the cost of passage [from] Korea to Hawaii, these people were recruited as 'contract-laborers' who agreed to work in Hawaii for three or four years in exchange for transportation costs. These workers had to pay-off the debt they had incurred during the passage from Korea to Hawaii. Actually, the contract-labor system was illegal in the United States because it was exploitative and it often violated the human rights of workers. Nevertheless, Hawaiian sugar plantation owners brought Korean workers to the United States as contract-laborers in order to maximize their profits."

Work on the sugar plantations was backbreaking and painstaking. Workers were awakened at sunrise by the blast of the plantation whistle. After a quick breakfast, they marched to the fields to begin work by 6:00 a.m. By 4:30 p.m., they had labored all day under the blazing sun with only a single 30-minute break for lunch. The ones who supervised workers were called lunas. The lunas watched over the workers constantly. Workers were not allowed to talk with other workers or stretch their backs. Those who violated these rules were whipped by [the] luna. Sometimes workers were beaten just for resting without permission." Chang and Kim, 31-3.

as we landed in Hawaii, we had no time to rest as we were forced to work all day at the sugar plantation. We cried enduring the painstaking labor, and thought of our hometown by looking at the sky.”¹³ The Korean-American immigrants in Hawaii could endure physical hardness, but it was very painful for them to withstand homesickness.

The pain became deeper and deeper to those Korean Americans who were still bachelors. The Korean-American single male laborers in the Hawaiian plantations were not allowed to go back for marriage in Korea, although they reached marriageable age. Many of them had already passed the marriageable time. The only way to marry Korean females was to seek “picture brides.”¹⁴ Therefore, the single males seeking companionship and family life, mailed photographs of themselves to Korea. They sometimes fabricated their pictures in order to make themselves look younger. On the other hand, the women who were going to be picture brides pledged to marry their bridegrooms whom they had never seen face to face but only through pictures, and departed for the long journey to meet their husbands. According to Hyun, about 1,000 picture brides came to Hawaii to marry from 1910 to 1924.¹⁵

Motivations of Koreans to Immigrate to the United States. What caused Koreans to immigrate to the United States from 1902 to 1945? In other words, why did Korean Americans come to the United States in this period? As explained earlier, in the years 1902-1945, most Korean people suffered from poverty and injustice due to the political and economic exploitation practiced by Korean rulers. Many Koreans lost homes, lands,

¹³ Samuel Lee, “Koreans in Hawaii, III,” New Life Magazine, June 1981, 52.

¹⁴ Hyun, 32.

¹⁵ Hyun, 32.

and properties because of severe poverty. To make things worse, the mania of colonization captured the world and Korea became the worst victim of it. Japan, a cruel colonialist, joined in the trend and swallowed up not only the territory of the Korean peninsula but also the spirit of the Korean people. After Japan forced Korea to sign the First and Second Korea-Japan Convention, it took away the power of diplomacy, finance, military, police, education, and culture of Korea and forced Korean children to learn under the Japanese educational system using only Japanese language in school. Japan furthermore led Koreans to the worship of the king of Japan.

To the oppressed Korean people, emigration was a way of “exodus” from economic and political harshness, exploitation, and religious persecution during the years of Japanese oppression. Therefore, unjustifiable pressure and cruel plundering of grain and lands by Japan not only implanted strong anti-Japanese feelings in the oppressed Korean people but also motivated Koreans to emigrate. More than one million Korean emigrants had already emigrated to Manchuria, and almost nine thousand to Russia by the end of the nineteenth century. The actual number of Korean emigrants in early 1910 had surpassed 200,000 and further increased to over 4,000,000 in 1945. Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim give a thoughtful summary on the reasons for the Korean emigration increase during the Japanese colonial period as follows: In sum, strong factors involved in the Korean immigration were politico-economical calamities derived from both foreign

encroachment and domestic failure to meet the crisis. Under these circumstances, the exodus of Korean peasants and laborers was an expected phenomenon.¹⁶

The reader may be wondering why the oppressed Korean people choose to immigrate to the United States? Perhaps there are hundreds of motivations that made Korean emigrants choose the United States. However, I will generalize their motivations into three categories. First, most Korean immigrants of the early days (1903-1905) coming to the Hawaiian plantations left their home country for better economic opportunity. The majority of the early Korean immigrants were manual laborers who had worked on farms and in ports in Korea. They were uneducated and unskilled. Of course, some of them had a little education under the influence of American Christian missionaries, but they were insignificant in number. Their real intention to immigrate to the Hawaiian island was to make money and return home as soon as freedom was given to their country.¹⁷ They anticipated their country getting out of Japanese pressure very soon. However, contrasted to their expectation, most of them could not make enough money, nor could they return to Korea. It was not long for them to realize that Hawaii was not a paradise in which they could earn a fortune. Each one became "a typical Marginal Man" who lost his/her expectations, families, friends, and country. It is simply said that they were failures in the Hawaiian island.

However, not all things turned out too badly for the Korean immigrants. The immigrants did not give up their lives in a foreign land. They began to realize the reality of

¹⁶ Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 44.

¹⁷ Bong Youn Choy, Koreans in America (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 77.

the Hawaiian plantations. The plantations were neither the place in which their hope would be realized nor the space in which their descendants would permanently live. They realized that the only things permitted to them were labor under the hot sun, harsh treatment by supervisors and owners of the plantations, and very low wages. After having served like slaves for the plantation owners for their duty days, they left the Hawaiian plantations and found jobs in the mainland of the United States as soon as possible.¹⁸ Of course, at first they worked as manual workers in the mainland; however, years later they were able to have their own businesses such as laundries, grocery stores, and barber shops.

Second, some Koreans came to the United State for better educational opportunity. Among the early immigrants in 1902-1905, very few people came to the United States with ambition for higher education. However, except for a very few successful cases, their ambitions slowly and slowly withered away in the Hawaiian plantations. The next wave of immigrants who came to study in the United States were among the picture brides. About 1,000 picture brides landed in Hawaii from 1910 to 1924. In those days in Korea, education opportunities were not available to Korean women, except to the women from the wealthy and socially high ranked families. However, when Western missionaries, especially American missionaries, landed in Korea, education opportunities were opened even to women. The missionaries founded schools as a means of proclaiming Christianity and training Korean Christian leaders. Henry

¹⁸ "According to the Korean census of 1910, only 964 males and 19 females returned to Korea, while 1,999 males and 12 females migrated to the mainland of the United States." Korean Association of New York, Miguk Sok Ui Hanin Sahoe [Korean-American community in the United States] (Seoul: Oh-neul, 1986), 14.

Appenzeller established the Paeche Haktang; Scranton the Ehwa Haktang; Horace Underwood the Kyongsin Hakkyo; Ellia the Chongsin Yohakkyo; and Horace Allen the Kwanghyewon (the first modern medical school in Korea). Among these schools, the Ehwa Haktang and the Chongsin Yohakkyo were educational institutions for women. Some women, who had experienced Western education with the help of the American missionaries, desired continued education in the United States and came to Hawaii as picture brides. However, their desire for higher education dried up while they were working hard for survival in the Hawaiian plantations.

However, there were other immigrants who could achieve higher education in the United States. Most of them immigrated to the United States after 1910: about 500 students from 1910 to 1924 and about 300 students from 1924 to 1945.¹⁹ They were usually the children of wealthy and reputable families in Korea and could study with their parents' support. Of course, some of them came from poor families and had to work for tuition and living expenses in the United States. However, the persons who studied completely in the United States were a very small portion of the first Korean-American immigrant generation. Such being the case, the immigrants educated in the United States became the spiritual and educational leaders in the Korean-American immigrant society as well as the bellwether for the Korean independence movement in the United States and in Korea.

Third, some Koreans came to the United States for political freedom. After Japan completely took over Korea economically and politically in 1910, Korean social and

¹⁹ Korean Association of New York, 14.

political leaders were the objects of supervision by Japan and sought refuge in other countries.²⁰ Some of them came to Hawaii and San Francisco and stimulated the Korean independence movement spirit in the hearts of Korean Americans. Political refugees established independence movement organizations and also worked with and in the existing organizations. It is no exaggeration to say that most Korean Americans were involved in independence movement organizations in those days. Therefore, as Cordova cites, "The uniqueness of the Korean-American experience is related to the Korean independence movement, which is strongly supported by most Korean immigrants in America."²¹ The independence movement was indeed a common goal for the Korean Americans for the years of 1905-1945. The Korean independence movement leaders reported to American people and to all peoples in the world the illegal unification of Korea with Japan. The prominent Korean-American independence movement leaders were Sung-man Rhee, Chang Ho Ahn, Yong Man Park, Philip Haisohn, In Hwan Chang, Myung-un Chun, and others. Syngman Rhee was elected the first president of the Republic of Korea; Chang Ho Ahn became an educator and philosopher; Yong Man Park founded a military school, the so called Kundan; Philip Jaisohn Suh printed the first Korean and English language newspaper, called *Dongip Sinmun*, which stimulated the independence movement spirit in Koreans; In Hwan Chang and Myung-un Chun

²⁰ "In Korea's semiofficial period of emigration, between 1905 (when the nation passed into Japanese control) and 1940, a few hundred political refugees arrived in the United States, along with students coming for advanced studies. Many leaders of the Korean community in America emerge from these groups and become the core of the Korean independence movement outside Korea. They form community organizations, build churches, begin Korean language schools, start businesses, and raise funds." Cordova, 28.

²¹ Cordova, 28.

assassinated Durham White Stevens, who was a pro-Japanese diplomatic advisor in San Francisco.

The Korean-American Church in the First Korean-American Community. The Korean-American church was established by/with the Korean-American immigrants. The immigrants, seeking better economic opportunity, educational opportunity, and political freedom in the United States, established the church for the sake of themselves. It means that the expectations of the immigrants from the church became the cause of the establishment of the church. In other words, the church was not born for/by itself but for/with the immigrants. Therefore, the church had to be sensitive to their expectations. Then what were the duties of the church to fulfill for the immigrants? In other words, what were the roles of the church that should be taken for the Korean-American immigrants during the first immigration period?

In order to figure out the roles of the church in the first Korean-American immigrant society, we have to realize the expectations of the immigrants from the church first. As I mentioned earlier, the immigration of the first Korean Americans was a kind of exodus from the harshness of Japan. However, their exodus did not mean their forever farewell to their home country. Rather, they considered their time in the United States as temporary stay. Therefore, their major concern was how to comeback home with success after the independence of their country. While having anticipated the independence of their country, they worked hard for the achievement of their dreams. However, in contrast to their longing, the independence did not occur immediately in the country. To make them more miserable, their dreams for success looked like a mirage in the United States.

It seemed to them that they had to be prepared for a long-term stay in the United States. As part of a long-term stay plan, it was demanded of Korean Americans to provide some kind of educational work for maintaining their Korean heritage because they were afraid of losing their Korean identity in the American society. Fortunately, the church, demanded to satisfying the expectations of Korean Americans, became a center of the salvation work for the souls of the immigrants and of the educational work for identity building of the Korean Americans in the United States.

Most Korean-American historians agree that the Korean-American church played three important roles for the first immigration community. The first role was to provide a place to worship God. The second was to maintain Korean heritage or identity in the community. As a part of this role, the church provided Korean language classes for the younger generation and taught them Korean culture. The last was to keep Korean nationalism, encouraging the immigrants to participate in the independence movement of their home country.²² With no doubt, therefore, most prominent figures among Korean-American independence movement leaders were Christian, and they were very influential to the general Korean-American immigrants in the first immigration period.

As a result of the church's deep interaction with the needs of the immigrants, the most distinguishable thing in the Korean-American society was a very active involvement of the Korean Americans in the church. This phenomenon has continuously appeared from the beginning to the present of Korean-American immigration. In the first immigration group, 40 percent were already Christians in Korea, and the others gradually

²² Hyun, 38.

came to church.²³ The first Korean-American worship service was held at Mokolia plantation in Hawaii on July 4, 1903. The number of baptized Christians prior to their emigration from Korea were about 400. Within a decade, the number of Christians grew to two thousand and eight hundred.²⁴ Moreover, the rapid increase of Korean-American Christians resulted in the immediate necessity of many other new churches. Within a decade, thirty-one churches were established for Korean Americans in Hawaii and on the mainland,²⁵ and provided social, emotional, and spiritual resting places for the immigrants as the church was demanded by the immigrants.

Korean-American Immigration after the Independence of Korea from Japan

Korean-American Immigration from 1946 to 1964

Situation of Korea between 1946 and 1964. The Korean people finally tasted the joy of their nation's independence from Japan on August 15, 1945. Korean people came out on the street and shouted with great joy "Ever last Korea! Ever last Korea!" However, their joy did not last long. The nation was divided into two. The United States and the Soviet Union played important roles in the territory division. The United States kept its army in South Korea, whereas the Soviet Union occupied the territory of North Korea. Both the United States and the Soviet Union promised to withdraw from the Korean peninsula as soon as the Japanese army was completely dismissed from the peninsula. The Korean people in the North and the South continued to object to the plan of trusteeship of the United States and the Soviet Union. The United Nations finally made

²³ Choy, 77.

²⁴ Warren Won Yong Kim, cited in Hyun, 29.

²⁵ Jung Young Lee, The Theology of Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 24.

a proposal for a general election and the establishment of a unified independent government in the peninsula. However, North Korea under the control of the Soviet Union, denied the proposal. In South Korea, fortunately, an independent government was established under the supervision of the United Nation and proclaimed its nation as the Republic of Korea on August 15, 1948. One month later, without the supervision of the UN, North Korea also set up a communist government. Therefore, three years after the nation tasted the joy of independence from Japan, the nation faced another tragedy, the permanent territorial division between the North and the South.

The political atmosphere of the world turned into a cold war situation led by the United States and the Soviet Union. The Korean peninsula was about to be another sacrifice of the cold war. The expected tragedy broke out on June, 25, 1950. The North Korean army, with the support of the Soviet Union's tremendous military aid, attacked South Korea. The North Koreans immediately occupied Seoul, the Capital of South Korea and pushed the Southern Korean army down to the Naktong River. However, with the aid of the UN forces, the South Korean army pushed the Northern army back north and attained liberation from North Korea after a three year war. The war ended, but a deep scar and pain was left on the nation. The peninsula became war ash; both the southern Koreans and northern Koreans gained nothing but *han* in their hearts. Many industrial buildings and much cultural inheritance was destroyed; the northern and southern peoples began mistrusting each other. The worst tragedy brought by the Korean War was a military truce line between the North and the South. This line has separated the North from the South and the South from the North from its establishment until now.

The political situation after the war was also uncomfortable for the northern Koreans and the southern Koreans. In the North, people suffered from the dictatorship of Il Sung Kim's family and of the North Korean Communist Party. In the South, people suffered from the dictatorship of Sung-man Rhee, the first president of the Republic of Korea, and the hardship of the greedy political rulers. Sung-man Rhee had extended his dictatorship through the amendments of the Constitution until the April Uprising of the students and citizens on April 26, 1960. However, the desire of the students and citizens to establish a democratic government could not be turned into reality after the military group led by General Chung-hee Park pulled off a coup and established a military government on May 5, 1961. The military government tried to reform economic and political structures of Korea. The government succeeded in reforming the nation's economy, but failed in the reformation of political structure after the government became avaricious for a long term seizure of power.

Korean Immigrants to the United States from 1945 to 1964. There is no written resource that tells us the number of Korean immigrants to the United States between 1945 (the year Korea gained independence from Japan) and 1950 (the year the Korean War erupted). One unofficial resource says that about 100 students came to the United States, and most of them did not return to Korea but obtained citizenship from the United States.²⁶ An active immigration from Korea to the United States began after the Korean War. Korean-American historians named the immigrants "Post-War Immigrants" who came to the United States between 1950 and 1964. Most post-Korean war immigrants

²⁶ Korean Association of New York, 15.

were the wives of American servicemen (6,423) and the Korean War orphans (5,348). In addition to these major groups, a few professional workers immigrated.

The majority of immigrants in the post-war immigration period were the Korean wives of American military servicemen. They lacked education and occupational skills in Korea as well as in the United States. As soon as they came to the United States, they became marginalized in the Korean-American society as well as from American society. The reason for their marginalization in the Korean-American society was that, in general, Korean people believed wives of American servicemen to be prostitutes or nearly so. Some Korean wives indeed were prostitutes in Korea, but some were not. However, Korean people treated them uniformly. On the other hand, the reason for their marginalization in American society was due to their poor communication skills and occupation skills. According to Bok Lim Kim, social alienation is the most painful experience for Asian wives, including Korean wives, in the United States. Many Asian wives are physically abused, commit suicide, and develop psychological disorders. Among the Asian wives, Korean wives of U.S. servicemen had the harshest time because they were mistreated by their own people in the United States.²⁷

Another large immigrant group in the post-war period was the Korean orphans. The Korean War killed millions and produced thousands of Korean orphans. The war orphans became homeless and suffered from extreme poverty. However, the Korean government could not help the orphans. Therefore, the U.N., especially the United States, sent food and medical aid for the orphans. The actual number of orphans was not

²⁷ Bok Lim Kim, "Asian Wives of U.S. Servicemen: Women in Shadows," *Amersasia Journal* 4, no. 1 (1977): 91-115.

collected even by the Korean government. The orphans sent to 215 orphanages were 24,945.²⁸ But the orphans outside of orphanages were countless. One estimate sets total at 6,423 orphans--white Koreans (46 percent), full Koreans (41 percent), and black Koreans (13 percent)--who were adopted by Korean families and American families in the United States.²⁹

Korean-American Immigration to the United States after 1965

Situation of Korea between 1965 and 1994. After leading a military coup d' etat in 1965, General Chung-hee Park and his followers organized the Democratic Republican Party and made a president-centered government, under the name of a successful economic development in the country. The system was welcomed by the Korean people at first. Basically, the economic development focused on an export driven economy. Under this policy, foreign capital was borrowed, and hundreds of factories were built in industrial cities. Thus 20 years after the departure of economic development, the economy of the country grew rapidly and attracted worldwide gaze. The world was surprised at the rapid growth and called the success "the Miracle of the Han River." The rapid growth of industry, however, did not give advantage to all Korean lives. It indeed improved the people's living condition, but it also made an economic gap between the wealthy and the poor and between industrial cities and rural cities.

In order to continue his political power, President Park, however, amended the Constitution and established a dictatorship after he enforced the October Restoration, the

²⁸ Charles G. Chakerian, From Rescue to Child Welfare (New York: Church World Service, 1968), 40.

²⁹ Hurh and Kim, 50.

so called Yusin Policy, in 1972. Yusin Policy looked for "Koreanistic" policies. However, it was just a pretext to soothe the people's rage. Through the policy, President Park established his long term dictatorship. In contrast to his expectation, the people did not remain in silence. Especially the students became involved in the anti-government movement and raised their voices against the policy and the dictatorship. Hundreds of students and civil right leaders were sent to prison, beaten up, and killed in silence. In this state of affairs, President Park was assassinated by his faithful servant, Jae-kyu Kim in 1989.

After the assassination of President Park, another group of soldiers carried out a coup d' etat under the direction of General Du-hwan Chun, who became the first ranked figure in political power within a few months. He established the Democratic Justice Party and amended the Constitution to allow him to assume the presidency. He still held absolute authority over the people and sent important political figures to jail in order to keep his authority in safety. After the presidency of Du-hwan Chun, Tae-woo Noh, the second important figure of the military coup d' etat with Do-hwan Chun, was elected to president in 1988. President Noh's administration was not a severe dictatorship, but still did not permit full freedom to the people. Following the example of President Chun, he was busy receiving bribes from politicians and businessmen. In this present day, the two former presidents are in prison for receiving bribes and killing innocent people in the coup.

Situation of the United States after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. Korean immigration increased rapidly with the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 signed by the John F. Kennedy administration. The Immigration and Naturalization Act abolished the restrictive immigration quota system against ethnic

minorities, especially against these of Asian ethnicity. "The Asian share of total immigration to the United States increased from 7.6 percent (1961-65) to 27.4 percent (1969-73), equaling the European share (27.3 percent in 1969-73) for the first time in the American history of immigration."³⁰ The new quota system in the United States allowed a maximum of twenty thousand immigrants to come to the United States from each nation. Through their benefit of the new system, without limitation of number, immediate relatives of American citizens--children, spouses, and parents of American citizens--could come to the United States and live with their families. This new system also extended immigration opportunities to professionals such as physicians, nurses, and pharmacists, because the United States was in short supply of health professionals.

Korean Immigrants to the United States after 1965. After the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, the most significant increase of the Korean-American immigrants occurred. As Table 1 indicates, the Korean immigration ratio rapidly increased up to fifteen times over 1965 levels within the first decade after the Immigration and Naturalization Act. However, the immigration ratio has gradually declined after 1975.

Table 1. Number of Korean Immigrants and American Citizenship Granted, from 1965 to 1994³¹

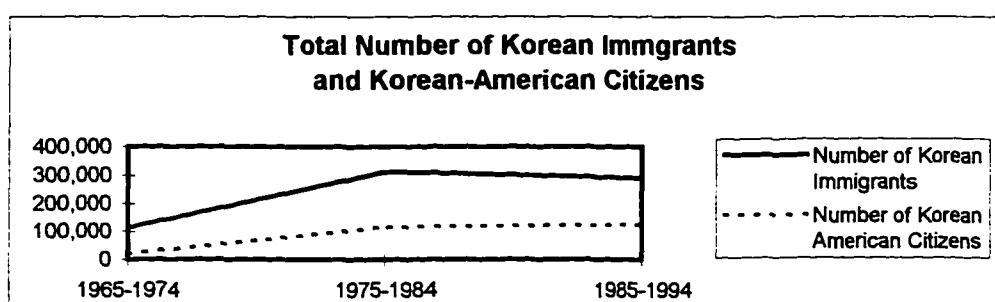
| Year | New Arrivals | Number of Korean Americans Who Became Citizens |
|------|--------------|--|
| 1965 | 2,165 | 1,027 |
| 1966 | 2,492 | 1,180 |
| 1967 | 3,356 | 1,353 |
| 1968 | 3,811 | 1,776 |
| 1969 | 6,045 | 1,646 |
| 1970 | 9,314 | 1,687 |
| 1971 | 14,297 | 2,083 |

³⁰ Hurh and Kim, 53.

³¹ Hyun Sik Shin, "300,000 Korean Americans Gained Citizenship: Possibility of Political Power within 20 Years," Joongang Ilbo [Korean Central Daily], 16 Oct. 1996, A1.

| | | |
|-------|---------|---------|
| 1972 | 18,876 | 2,933 |
| 1973 | 22,930 | 3,562 |
| 1974 | 28,028 | 4,451 |
| 1975 | 28,362 | 6,007 |
| 1976 | 30,830 | 6,450 |
| 1977 | 30,917 | 10,446 |
| 1978 | 29,288 | 12,575 |
| 1979 | 29,248 | 13,406 |
| 1980 | 32,320 | 14,073 |
| 1981 | 32,663 | 13,258 |
| 1982 | 30,814 | 13,488 |
| 1983 | 33,339 | 12,808 |
| 1984 | 33,042 | 14,019 |
| 1985 | 35,253 | 16,824 |
| 1986 | 35,776 | 18,037 |
| 1987 | 35,849 | 14,233 |
| 1988 | 34,703 | 13,012 |
| 1989 | 34,222 | 11,301 |
| 1990 | 32,301 | 10,500 |
| 1991 | 26,518 | 12,216 |
| 1992 | 19,359 | 8,297 |
| 1993 | 18,026 | 9,611 |
| 1994 | 15,417 | 11,389 |
| Total | 709,561 | 263,648 |

Figure 1. Total Number of Korean Immigrants and Koreans with Citizenship, from 1965 to 1994



The distinguished increase of Korean immigrants in the United States could be seen when the U.S. Census Bureau began counting Korean Americans as a distinct ethnic group after the 1970 Census. The 1970 Census reported the number of Korean Americans as 70,598.³² However, the actual size of the immigration was much higher

³² Hurh and Kim, 54.

than reported in the 1970 Census. It is generally believed that the number reported by the 1970 Census was miscalculated and that the actual number of Korean-American immigrants in the United States by 1970 had reached up to 113,000. Korean-American immigrants ranked as the fourth largest Asian population in the United States in 1980. According to the Los Angeles Korean Consulate General, 1,162,487 Korean Immigrants lived in the United States by November, 1988.³³

Along with the increase in the number of immigrants, the Korean-American immigrants have gradually obtained American citizenship and gained political power in the United States. We do not know how many Korean-American immigrants acquired American citizenship before 1964 because of poor records of the immigrants during that period. Therefore, we have to deal with the number after 1965. After the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, the total number of people granted American citizenship among the Korean-American immigrants during three decades reached 263,648 (21,698 between 1965 and 1974; 116,530 between 1975 and 1984; and 125,420 between 1985 and 1994). The number of American citizens among the Korean immigrants is large enough to bring the voice of the Korean-American community into the American political mainstream.³⁴ In American history Asian immigrants were ethnic minorities who were treated as a marginalized group.³⁵ They struggled for survival in the society. They were the sacrificial goat for the economic and political advantage of the Americans and Europeans. They worked hard for American society but were paid low wages and

³³ Hankook Ilbo [Korean Times], 26 May 1989, cited in Hyun, 39.

³⁴ Shin, A.I.

³⁵ Jun Young Lee, Theology of Marginality, 1-2.

received poor health care and social service. Therefore, the history of Asian-Americans was “a cycle of recruitment, exploitation, violent acts directed at the most recent immigrants, and limiting of immigrants’ rights.”³⁶

The history of Korean immigration is not exceptional. There is no clear distinction for Koreans from other Asian immigrant groups in the eyes of white Americans. To the white people, Koreans look alike Chinese and Japanese. Therefore, Koreans are often treated as Chinese and Japanese. They are marginalized as Chinese and Japanese in the society. They are the target of discrimination in the society. Although the Korean Americans in the period of 1951 and 1968 had professional occupations in Korea, they had to obtain nonprofessional jobs in the society because of their poor English skills. In order to survive in the society, they worked at hamburger shops, grocery shops, and restaurants. Their occupational abilities were judged by their English skill. Therefore, it is not surprising that the number of professional Koreans declined after 1974.³⁷ Of course, the immigration ratio to the United States has also been reduced since 1975. Furthermore, there are hundreds of Koreans who return to Korea these days because the country has gained political stability and economic success. There is no reason for them to stay in the United States where they are discriminated against and marginalized.

³⁶ Cordova, 31-32.

³⁷ Professional occupation was high in the 1961-65 period (71%), and increased in the 1966-68 period (75%), but declined noticeably in later years (40% in 1974-77). “Although 72 percent of Koreans held professional or managerial-level jobs in Korea, a majority could not find positions in America comparable to their qualifications. They became self-employed and started service-oriented businesses: hamburger stands, barbershops, grocery stores, food service, restaurants, maintenance companies, and others.” Jung Young Lee, Theology of Marginality, 25.

Motivations of Koreans to Immigrate to the United States after 1965. As described above, Korea was successful in its economic reformation, and the Korean people lived in better economic living conditions. Why did Koreans continue to emigrate from their country? Did they emigrate because of political oppression from the dictatorships of their former presidents? The response to the question would be yes and no. The reason to respond with a yes is that some political refugees emigrated from the country to other countries because of harsh political persecutions in the country. However, the reason to respond with a no is that generally immigrants from Korea to the United States were not political refugees. The average immigrants were the well-educated and skilled who could manage good livings in Korea.³⁸ Why did they come to the United States? I found out many possible reasons that manipulated the people to immigrate to the United States from 1965 (when the Immigration and Naturalization Act was released) to 1990 (when the number of Korean immigration had rapidly declined). However, I will mention only two reasons.

In the first place, I believe, the strong expectation of education in the Korean society resulted the continuity of Korean immigration to the United States. To the Korean people, education is very important because they relate better education to a better occupation. In general, indeed, better education brings a better job for them in Korea. Therefore, Korean parents provide their children with the best education that they can afford. They spend all their money and often sell their properties, including home and

³⁸ “Koreans were also the most highly educated group among all [immigrant] groups--71 percent of them completed high school and 36 percent graduated from colleges, where only 11 percent of the total U.S. population were college graduates in 1970.” Hurh and Kim, 55.

land, to provide an educational fund for their children's education. This high expectation for education manipulated the increase of students studying aboard. In fact, sending children to study abroad began before 1965. It had occurred in the first and the post-war Korean immigration periods, too. However, the number of students studying abroad was not significant in those days.

After the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, the American immigration offices were flooded with Korean students who wanted to study in the United States. In the 1960s and the 1970s, most students studied in American universities and learned high technology and new educational subjects which were unknown and unstudied in Korea. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, an early education in advanced countries won popularity in Korea. The trend of an early education in advanced countries increased not only the number of young aged Korean Americans in the United States but also the great growth of family immigration in the United States in recent years.

In the second place, the continuity in the number of Korean immigrants in number has been due to the conscientization of Korean people, particularly that of Korean females. During the first Korean-American immigration period, single male immigrants were dominant. However, after the post-war immigration period, the number of single and married females extended. After the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, female immigrants came to the United States not less than male immigrants. In 1977, the ratio of male Korean immigrants went down to 64 percent and female Korean immigrants went up

to 36 percent.³⁹ The number of female Korean immigrants has been continuously going up since 1977.

Women used to be victims of the traditional Confucian system in Korea. They were under the subjugation of men. All rights were provided to men. Therefore, women were unsatisfied by such discrimination and limitations. However, such practices do not last forever. As time goes by, the women's role in their families and in the society has changed. The large family system which shut up women in the house and prevented them from going out, became loosened. Women are permitted to work outside in the small family system. They are also allowed to have equal education with men, if they are not restricted by economic condition. Their higher education enables them to seek for equality with men in social and political opportunities. However, they also realize that the male dominant society is not easily changed. Therefore, some females who have suffered terribly from male dominant practices, have longed for immigration to the countries in which equality was promised not only to men but also to women. As a result, many Korean females, especially single females, have immigrated to the United States.

³⁹ Hurh and Kim, 54.

CHAPTER 2

Relationship between Korean Americans and the Korean-American Church in the Present

In the previous chapter I have discussed Korean immigration history in relation to the motivations for emigration from Korea, reasons for immigration to the United States, and the relationship between the church and the lives of the first Korean-American immigrants. This chapter, however, will narrow down our discussion focusing on the living experiences of Korean-American immigrants in the present American society and on the responses of the church to them. One thing that the reader should remember, however, is that this project neither intends to criticize the American society in which Korean Americans have had hardship politically and economically nor to blame the Korean-American church for neglecting to respond to the hardship of the immigrants. The purpose of this chapter is to inform the reader of how Korean-American immigrants are living in the United States and of how the church responds to their life experiences. The next purpose is that the Korean Americans become aware of their being in the American society and that the church would become willing to embrace their pain and provide proper theology and education leading them to a creation of a positive identity in this society.

Living Experiences of Korean Americans in American Society

General Observation about Korean Americans

According to the 1988 Census of the Los Angeles Korean Consulate General, the total number of Korean Americans in the United States was 1,162,487.¹ As indicated in

¹ Hankook Ilbo [Korean Times], 26 May 1989, cited in Hyun, 39.

the previous chapter, about 90 percent of the Korean Americans are new immigrants who came to the United States after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965.

Therefore, the survey of Yong Soo Hyun reports the length of stay of Korean Americans in the United States as follows: among 234 Korean-American respondents, 0 to 5 years (48, 21%), 6 to 11 years (75, 32%), 12 to 17 years (68, 29%), 18-23 years (29, 12%) and 24 or more years (14, 14%).² He verifies that the majority of the Korean Americans have less than 15 years experience in the United States.

Another significance in the Korean immigrant community is that the majority of the community has experienced an immoderate drop of occupation level after their immigration to the United States. Almost eighty percent of Korean male immigrants had had job experiences in Korea, whereas half of the Korean female immigrants had worked in Korea. Among those immigrants, fifty-five percent of the males had professional and semiprofessional occupations, whereas ninety percent of females were white collar laborers such as professional, semiprofessional, and clergy. However, after their immigration to the United States, most of them could not hold white collar jobs in the United States. Over sixty percent of the males and over fifty-five percent of the females had to become manual laborers in the United States.³ Perhaps there are many reasons that prevented them from obtaining better white collar jobs in the United States. However, the main one was the English speaking problem among the immigrants.

² Hyun, 161.

³ Hurh and Kim, 105.

Figure 2. English Ability among Korean-American Males⁴

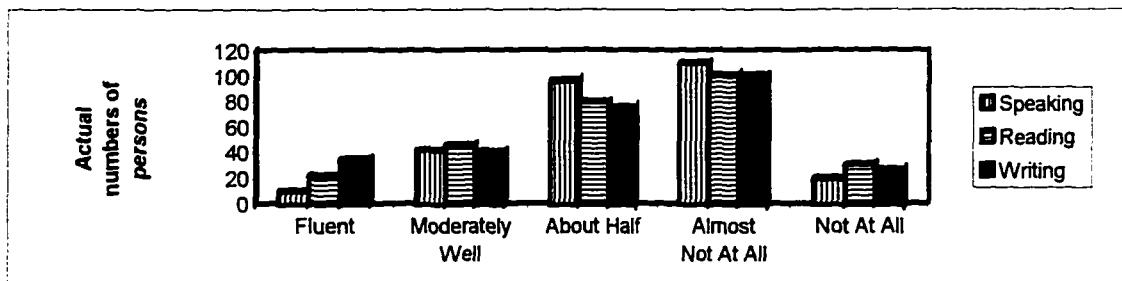
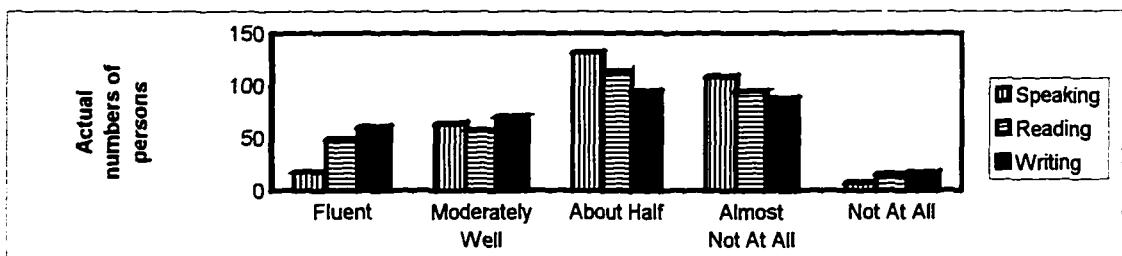


Figure 3. English Ability among Korean-American Females⁵



Acculturation among Korean Americans

The survey on Korean-American acculturation was done with the Korean Americans in the Los Angeles area by Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim. The reason to take the survey in the area of Los Angeles was that the Los Angeles area contains the biggest population of Korean Americans in the United States. In fact, the number of Korean Americans in the Los Angeles area has rapidly increased from the 1960s to 1990s. The period between 1980 and 1986 was the peak of Korean migration into the area. In the period, the number of immigrants went up 99 percent.⁶

This survey examined the acculturation of Korean immigrants in relation to their English skill, exposure to American media, and adoption of American names in the

⁴ Hurh and Kim, 215.

⁵ Hurh and Kim, 215.

⁶ Hankook Ilbo [Korean Times], 5 Jan. 1990, cited in Hyun, 35.

American society. The survey came to the conclusion that the majority of Korean-American residents in the Los Angeles area were not acculturated into the American society. The survey supports its conclusion with three proofs. First, because of language handicap, the Korean-American immigrants in the Los Angeles area struggle in the American society. According to the survey, a large portion of them could not express what they wanted to speak or write in English. Less than one percent were proficient in speaking, reading and writing in English. About half still felt difficulty in English but could basically communicate. About forty percent were hardly able to speak, read, and write in English. And the rest were completely illiterate in English.

Second, most Korean Americans get information through Korean newspapers. More than eighty percent of the Korean Americans who subscribe to a newspaper subscribe to Korean-American newspapers, whereas less than twenty percent were regular readers of American newspapers. The surveyors assume that the number of Korean-American newspaper subscribers has increased after the survey was taken since Korean-American newspapers have become available in many places, especially in the Los Angeles and Orange County areas.⁷

Third, Korean Americans were not enthusiastic about adopting American first names in the United States. The negative tendency to adopt an American name is found mostly in the first generation Korean Americans. For them, their name is not just an indication, but themselves. For example, my first name is Sang Ho. "Sang" means "mutual;" and "Ho" denotes "extensive and spacious." The combination of the two words

⁷ Hurh and Kim, 77.

stands for “mutual extension,” “mutual development,” and “cooperation with others for the commonwealth.” Therefore, “Sang Ho” does not simply contain an indication of me, but also the purpose of my being in this world. Therefore, whenever the name is called, I remember the purpose of my being in the world sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. This name actually provides me the direction of where to go and how to live with others in this world.

Moreover, names are sacred for Korean Americans because they are given by their parents and grandparents. To change a name sometimes means to ignore the will of parents and grandparents, the name givers. The reason is as follows. Korean parents spend a great amount of time to make a name for their child. They look in dictionaries and collect advice from the elders in their communities. They finally put everything in a name: their expectation of the child, family philosophy, and sometimes patriotism. Because of this kind of deep background involved in a name-making process, despite harshness and threat of death during the Japanese colonial days, Koreans refused to change their names and died for them. Therefore, the first generation Korean Americans, especially the Korean-American elders, do not understand why the young Korean Americans change their first names and are called by American names. The strong negation to name change also appears among young Korean Americans who are loyal to their families (and sometimes to their home country, Korea). Therefore, the negative view of name changes is a tendency that appears among Korean Americans in general.

Therefore, it is not surprising data that only about half of the respondents surveyed approved of name changing and less than forty percent disapproved it.⁸

The next outstanding point of the Korean-American community is a strong Korean ethnic confinement in the American society. I believe that the above three factors of acculturation contribute to Korean Americans establishing Korean ethnic confinement. The first factor, English handicap, withdrew the Korean Americans from the American mainstream to the particular areas such as Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. Their poor English language ability becomes not only a cause for self-devaluation of their value in this foreign society but also the grounds of discrimination exercised by the American mainstream. The second factor, the little contact with American media, prevents them from realizing what is going on in the American society and what they need to do in/ for the society. Their knowledge of the society is controlled by certain Korean language media. They are indeed the "immigrants of narrow outlook" in the American society. This kind of self-withdrawal from the American mainstream finally turns into a self imposed ethnic confinement. The third factor, a negation to name change, can be understood not only as a result of self-ethnic confinement but also a cause of it. Of course, Korean Americans do not want to change their names in terms of respect for the will of their parents and grandparents. In fact, however, they also refuse to adopt American names in order to avoid being "converted" to Americanization. Therefore, negatively speaking, it is a way of avoidance of Americanization; positively speaking, it is a way of holding their own values as Koreans and Korean Americans in this foreign land.

⁸ Hurh and Kim, 77-78.

From the replies of the respondents to the survey, we can see their efforts to keep Korean values in the United States in various ways. The majority of Korean Americans are attending Korean-American churches and pushing their children to learn the Korean language. About 90 percent of Korean Americans hold a strong opinion that Korean-American children should learn the Korean language. This strong compulsion leads Korean-American churches to provide Korean language class in the church programs. As Korean Americans did in their home country, they also continue to give priority to family duty (252, 89.7% of the males; 306, 91.6% of the females). Moreover, the majority of Korean Americans do not want to marry people of other races. The reasons for disapproval of intermarriage, according to the survey, were: "differences in feelings, thinking, and customs between races; dislike of mixing blood; to preserve pride, purity, and heritage of Korean race; misfortune of mixed-blood children; and so on."⁹

Struggle of Korean Americans against Injustice in American Society

Legislation which threatens the existence of bilingual voting rights, bilingual education, and other bilingual services was recently passed in several states.

.....
Recall now the early history of Asian Pacific Americans: a cycle of recruitment, exploitation, violent acts directed at the most recent immigrants, and limiting of immigrants' rights.¹⁰

Joan M. Cordova, a bilingual resource teacher in the Sacramento City Unified School District, criticized injustice against Asian-Americans including Korean Americans in the American society. According to her, most Asian-Americans are battling with economic and political injustice in the society. Despite their hard work in the society, they

⁹ Hurh and Kim, 79-80.

¹⁰ Cordova, 31.

get lower wages and inadequate health care and social services. They are struggling to learn English and residing in "ghetto communities."¹¹ Therefore, it is right for Jung Young Lee, a Korean-American theologian, to claim that "all of us [Asian Americans] are marginal people. Marginal status in America necessarily includes suffering, rejection, discrimination."¹²

The Korean Americans occupy a large portion of the Asian-American community in the United States. The Korean-American community belongs to the fourth largest Asian American minority in the United States. One fourth to one third of Asian immigrants have been Korean after 1975. Most Korean-American historians agree that the population of Korean-American will be reaching to 1.3 million people by the very beginning of the next century. Therefore, it can be assumed that when someone mentions Asian-Americans, the discussion at least partially involves Korean Americans. Therefore, when Cordova mentioned Asian-American experiences in the United States, we can assume that the experiences of the Korean Americans were certainly involved in them. Many Americans unconsciously believe that the Korean immigrants are "successful immigrants" in the United States. In a sense they are right. However, in another sense they are wrong. The reason to react to them positively is that some Korean Americans became successful in this society economically and politically. However, it does not mean that all Korean Americans succeeded in this society. The successful are indeed very few, if we look inside of the community. Most Korean Americans are struggling for survival in this society. Therefore, we can say that the assumption of Americans are "absolutely"

¹¹ Cordova, 31.

¹² Jun Young Lee, Theology of Marginality, 9.

wrong. The reason to strongly reject the assumption is that the false assumption has often led the Korean Americans to be the sacrificial goat in this society. There are so many cases where the Korean Americans became sacrificial goats because of the false assumption. Among these cases, the Los Angeles Riot of 1992 was the most outstanding example. Therefore, through reexamination of the riot, I will reveal the cry of the Korean Americans against injustice in the American society.

First of all, the riot did not happen due to the exploitation of the “successful immigrants” against the black community in the Los Angeles area. According to Edward T. Chang, “the Korean merchants in the 1980s and 90s have simply replaced Jewish merchants in African American neighborhoods and that Korean-African American conflict is nothing more than the ‘old’ [sic] problem of Jewish-African American conflict.”¹³ He indicates that the problems between the buyers and the sellers in the area had already existed before the Korean Americans replaced the empty retail stores. In other words, the Korean Americans took the burden on their shoulders from the beginning. Before their coming to the empty places, the Korean-American retailers had to understand the depth of the conflict between the buyers and the sellers and to realize the pain of the black community. However, the Korean-American retailers did not have enough information and could not comprehend the pain of the black community because of their poor English skill. They just worked hard day and night in order to survive in a foreign land. Their enthusiasm in business was misunderstood by the black community. The Korean Americans, unfortunately, appeared to be “money chasers” like Jewish-American retailers

¹³ Edward T. Chang, “Jewish and Korean Merchants in African American Neighborhood: A Comparative Perspective,” Amerasia Journal 19, no. 2 (1993): 5.

to the black community.¹⁴ I do not intend to defend the Korean-American retailers from being accused of exploiting economic opportunities in the black community. Sometimes they indeed did it. They overcharged the buyers while selling inferior vegetables and other necessary goods in the black community. However, it is a significant cause of the Los Angeles Riot of 1992.

Second, the riot was a reaction to economic and political injustice of whites against blacks. In American history, blacks have fought against injustice done by whites. The best example was the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1960s. It was an outcry of the black community for justice. Therefore, Ella Steward cites:

The existence of Koreans in our communities is not black people's major problem. The existence of covert and overt racism leveled against Blacks in particular is a major problem for black people because racism prevents Blacks from obtaining equal justice, equal jobs, and an equal education. Out of these frustrations comes hostility, which ultimately leads to interethnic tensions.¹⁵

Delores S. William, Associate Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, criticizes whites for "white racial narcissism." Her term, "white racial narcissism," indicates the "force that degrades black and elevates white."¹⁶ Throughout North American history, blacks have been treated as "an emotionally partisan

¹⁴ Chang, 5.

¹⁵ Ella Stewart, "Communication between African Americans and Korean Americans: Before and after the Los Angeles Riots," *Amerasia Journal* 19, no. 2 (1993): 33. Steward interviewed African Americans from May to Nov. 1992.

¹⁶ Dolores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 88.

color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion."¹⁷

This kind of discrimination has not stopped being applied to everyday American politics and economics against blacks. A recent article points out:

Among other data: A 1987 study related to Supreme Court appeal showed that murderers who killed white people were 10 times more likely to receive the death sentence than murderers who killed a black. One in five black men ultimately spends time in jail, seven times as high as for white."¹⁸

It discloses that black family income is less than 60 percent of that of white. This shows that it is somewhat manipulated that blacks are basically poorer than whites in the United States.

Third, the Korean Americans were the sacrificial goat during the riot, manipulated by mainstream American economical and political figures and the major media. The riot occurred on April 29, 1992 when I lived in the city of Honolulu, Hawaii. I was informed about the riot from a white male friend who spoke a little Korean. When he told me about the riot, he described the incident like a war between Korean Americans and black Americans. According to him, most Korean-American retail stores were burnt out and many Korean Americans died. He called black Americans *kkam-doong-yi*, meaning black skinned people. So as soon as I reached my home, I turned on the TV and watched the burning in the Los Angeles area. As the friend described to me, a battle between the Korean Americans and the black Americans was on going on the "American" TV channels. It seemed that many Korean Americans would die of the burning, as the

¹⁷ Winthrop Jordan, White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 7.

¹⁸ "Black Family Income 58 Percent That of Whites," The Disciple, July 1992, 32.

American friend said. However, I found out that the riot was not a battle between the Korean Americans and the black Americans and that no information on the death of Korean Americans from the burning was mentioned in a Korean newspaper that I bought. Many Korean-American retail stores were burnt by fire and robbed by the demonstrators. In fact, the Korean Americans had severe damages from the riot. One thing interesting to me was that Korean-American newspapers did not describe black people as the only demonstrators who burnt and robbed Korean-American stores, but Hispanic and other racial peoples had also been involved. Moreover, not only Korean-American stores were burnt but also many other stores that belonged to other racial peoples.

After coming in contact with the different viewpoint of the riot, it was not difficult for me to realize that the misunderstanding of the riot as a war between the Korean Americans and the black Americans was played up by the American mainstream politicians and the American main media. As many Korean-American scholars pointed out, the riot was due to the beating of Rodney King by the three white officers and the white jury's wrong verdict. However, if we look inside of the tension involved in the riot, we can see the main cause of the riot: the white people's discrimination against black people and other people of color.¹⁹ Black people saw the verdict as a discrimination against themselves and exploded with anger. However, the political figures in the American mainstream were afraid of the anger of black people and turned the seed of fire from the conflict between black people and white people to the conflict between black American

¹⁹ Chin Hyung Kim, "Continuous Revolution of Blacks for Survival and Korean Americans," in Riot or Revolution?: A Theological Reflection on L.A. Uprising, ed. SungDo Kang (Seoul: Chomyung Moonwhasa, 1994), 21.

buyers and Korean-American sellers. Under the control of the politicians, the American media increased the interethnic tension and hostility between Korean Americans and black Americans and manipulated the riot to be a war between the two races. For the American politicians and media, the safety of three violent officers was more important than the Korean immigrants who lost 2,200 stores and the life of a young Korean-American who died in the riot. Therefore, Edward Chang correctly remarked that Korean Americans are “minjung” and outsiders “who suffer from economic exploitation and political subjection” in the United States.²⁰

Korean-American Church and Korean-American Community in the Present

The Korean-American Church in Korean-American Immigrant Society

According to the report of the Los Angeles Korean Consulate General in November, 1988, among 1,162,487 Koreans Americans who lived in the United States, 77 percent of them were Christians.²¹ SungDo Kang, Director of the Center for Pacific and Asian American Ministries at the Claremont School of Theology, believes that more than 70 percent of the immigrants were attending regular Sunday worship services and that about 780 Korean-American churches served them in 1994.²² It is generally believed that one fourth of Korean people are Christians in Korea. Why is the percentage of Korean-American Christians in the United States noticeably higher than that of Christians in Korea? Unlike the high percentage of Christians among the immigrants in the first Korean

²⁰ Chang, 11.

²¹ Hankook Ilbo [Korean Times], 26 May 1989, cited in Hyun, 39.

²² SungDo Kang, “A Potential Contribution of the Korean Immigrant Church,” in Riot or Revolution?: A Theological Reflection on L.A. Uprising, ed. SungDo Kang (Seoul: ChoMyung Moonwhasah, 1994), 161.

immigration period, the majority of the Korean immigrants after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 were not indeed Christians before they immigrated to the United States because neither have American missionaries influenced Korean people to immigrate, nor have Koreans had strong desire to escape from Korea for religious freedom since Korea was independent from Japan in 1945.

I believe the rapid increase in the number of Korean-American Christians in the Korean-American community must be understood in relationship between the church and the needs of the Korean Americans in the United States. It is very natural that an immigrant feels something missing and needed in a foreign land. Therefore, the Korean immigrants looked for some places in which they could meet their unfilled desires. To what place must they go? The answer for this question was not easy to be given to the immigrants because their unfilled desires were complex. In fact, what they were in need of was not only social and material but also psychological and spiritual. There were many types of small voluntary associations which provided some common interest and will for the immigrants. However, these voluntary associations could not be working for all but limited to certain groups of people because of their particular interest and will. Furthermore, these associations aimed at secular goals such as political and economic advantages.

However, the place in which common people could meet their needs must offer somewhat more than political and economical preferences. Indeed, the place had to be a place in which they can nurture their spirituality, get rest for their tired bodies and souls, share information, and have education for themselves as well as for their children. Where is the place? Fortunately, the Korean-American church has been functioning to meet the

needs and attract the immigrants since the church was established in the first immigration period (see Chapter 1). Therefore, it is not unusual that the survey of Hurh and Kim tells that 60 percent of Korean Americans attend the church for religious obligation; 20 percent for psychological urgency; 10 percent for social relationship; and 10 percent for other reasons.²³ As a result, the church holds the most dominant membership among voluntary associations (87 percent), although many other voluntary associations still serve the immigrants in the community.

Hyun summarizes that the roles are as follows: the first role of the Korean-American church was to save the souls of Korean immigrants in the dimension of a “religious redemptive mandate”; the second is that the church became the center in which Korean immigrants gain and exchange necessary information for living in the dimension of a “social mandate”; the third is that the church became a resting place for the immigrants and a place to share their stories with each other in the dimension of a “psychological mandate”; the last is that the church functioned as an educational place for the teaching of Korean culture, history, and nationalism for the first and second generations in the dimension of an “educational mandate.”²⁴

On the other hand, we can also interpret the functions of the church as stemming from demands that the church as a voluntary association must satisfy the needs of the immigrants. In other words, if the church fails to fulfill its requirements, it can possibly be faced with the brisk loss of membership in the community. It cannot be simply assumed that the church attendants are satisfied with what the church has offered to them in the

²³ Hurh and Kim, 236.

²⁴ Hyun, 39.

past. The membership increase of the church in the past was a reflection that the immigrants longed for something missing in their lives in a foreign land and that they expected those needs to be met in the church. Therefore, the church should not misunderstand its membership increase as a success in the community, but as an extra weight of expectation and demand. The reason to emphasize this is that about half of the female respondents, the majority of the Korean-American church, pointed out that they were going to church for peace of mind.²⁵ As mentioned above, a large portion of the church attendants were not Christians before they immigrated from Korea to the United States. Therefore, they are, so called, beginners in the church whose adherence to the church may not be very strong. For many of them, the church is not a place to devote themselves with time and money, rather it is a place to get what they miss and need in this exotic society.

Korean-American Church for the Immigrants

This section focuses on how much the present Korean-American church carries out its functions in the Korean-American community. I already mentioned that the membership increase cannot be an indication of the church's fulfillment of its duties. I believe the church's fulfillment has to be evaluated by its members, but not by the church itself. For as pointed out above, the members came to the church for their own sake, not for the sake of the church. In October 27, 1996, a Korean-American church to which I belong, made a questionnaire and distributed it to the members. The questionnaire contained several questions about the church's programs such as mission, ministers' home visitation, worship service, staff leadership, inside and outside environment, and outsider's

²⁵ Hurh and Kim, 236.

understanding of the church. The general responses of the members to the questions were positive, but not some. Among the negative responses, I was attracted to two viewpoints. The first was that over half of the members did not think that the church offered useful programs for the local community. The second was that over 75 percent of the respondents believed that the church and the members did not give a positive image to the outsiders of the church. I do not conclude that this survey reflects everything about our church or other Korean-American churches. Of course, the survey respondents do not represent all members of the church, and other churches have different programs from the church in which the survey was done. However, one thing that I want to emphasize is that the survey has to be carefully considered by the church as well as by other Korean-American churches. The numbers of the respondents who gave negative responses to the church's outreach programs were small. However, who can deny that they were representative of other members of the church as well as those of other churches in the Korean-American community.

I am very doubtful of the existing ministry approaches in the Korean-American church. They are too conservative and lock out the lives of Korean Americans. According to Marion Dearman, 90 percent of Korean-American churches tend to be fundamental, conservative, and evangelical.²⁶ I do not mean conservatism in the church is always bad for Korean-American Christians. However, the problem is the partial stress of the church on self-centered faith growth and salvation. This narrow view frequently

²⁶ "Marion Dearman, "Structure and Function of Religion in the Los Angeles Korean Community: Some Aspects," in Koreans in Los Angeles: Prospects and Promises, eds. Eui-Young Yu et al. (Los Angeles: Koryo Research Institute, 1982), 165-83.

emphasizes Bible study, prayer in a retreat center, and spiritual revival movement in the Korean-American churches. These kinds of activities focusing on individual spiritual growth were welcomed by the Korean Americans in the past, as they captivated the minds of American Christians in the beginning of the twentieth century. For the sake of membership growth, many Korean-American churches sometimes had a tendency to create the individual faith-oriented emphasis in the minds of Korean-American Christians. Therefore, for example, some churches regularly offered spiritual revivals as a means of church advertisement.

However, the present Korean-American church should remember its role in the Korean-American community. The church should bear in mind that it exists for the community, but not vice versa. The church is called to touch the wounded hearts of the community but not to increase its membership in the community. Therefore, the church should remember that the self-centered view often becomes an obstacle preventing itself from reaching out to the wounds of the Korean-American community. The church should change the view of self-centered faith growth somewhat for the future of the church and its members. The church should reshape its conservative viewpoints for the needs of its members.

I have no doubt that the most pending role for the present Korean-American church is to embrace the pains of the Korean -Americans with its heart and to cure them. Then how? How does the church stretch out its hand to the pains and wrap them? I do not believe the self-oriented view can help the church to carry out the task. The church

According to Chang (p. 15), "Out of the sixty-five ministers who responded to the questionnaire, only one minister classified himself as a 'liberal.'"

needs to have re-theological and re-educational understandings of its role in the community. In my opinion, the re-theological and re-educational understandings must be helpful for the church to fulfill three tasks for the wounded Korean-American community. The first task is to console the wounds of immigrants resulting from social discrimination in the American society and the aftereffect of the Los Angeles riot. The second is to lead the immigrants to the creation of a positive view for such "hanful" experiences. The last is to solve a pending question in the Korean-American church: how to plant the faith of the first generation in the second and third generations of Korean-American Christians.

For example, through remembering the Los Angeles riot, it is the very time for the church to re-interpret the riot theologically and re-educate the victims concerning it. Someone may think that it is too late to discuss the riot. However, the reason I pull out the event into this project is not only that the aftereffect of the riot still remains in the hearts of many victims in the Korean-American community, but also that the riot is a common ground that brings the first and the younger generation into one place because it effected almost all Korean Americans, regardless of the differences of ages and genders. The riot was the worst experience for the immigrants, but it can be God's blessing for them because it can be the new starting point for them. The following chapter, therefore, will re-interpret the riot and the history of Korean Americans and suggest a myth-making process which can allow them to develop a positive viewpoint of the riot and their "hanful" experiences in the United States. The fourth chapter will suggest a mindam sharing education that, from the riot and their hanful experiences, can help the immigrants to create stories which can be shared among the generations to create a positive identity in the United States.

CHAPTER 3

Theology of Korean-American Culture

The Korean Americans are neither Koreans nor Americans in the United States. They do not belong to either group. They do not feel they are a part of the American society in which they now live, yet. They do not consider the Korean society as their place of belongingness, either. They are aliens in the American society. Their immigrant status makes them homeless and strangers in this society. They have conflicts among the different generations in the families. They fight against marginalization, racial discrimination, unjust economic distribution, and unequal social opportunities in the American society. They also struggle with other ethnic minorities who are discriminated against and marginalized in the white European dominant American society. Therefore, they are sometimes “neither/nor” but sometimes “in-between” in the United States. The “neither/nor” and “in-between” status requires them to create a new theology fitting their “neither/nor” and “in-between” culture. The neither/nor and in-betweenness make it difficult for them to adopt a Korean theology as well as an American theology. They have indeed experienced the taste of Korean theology and American theology, but they are not satisfied with them. Dissatisfaction to the two theologies is that these theologies are born and grew up in different contexts from the Korean-American context. In my opinion, Korean theology is not appropriate even for Korean people, because the theology failed to be grafted into the thought and culture of Korean people from the beginning of Korean Christian history.¹ The major Korean theologians under the influence of American

¹ C. S. Song, Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 11.

missionaries were busily adopting American/Western theology which is enslaved by Western cultural colonialism.

Generally believed, theology is formed in the relationship between contemporary culture and biblical tradition. In this sense, the best theology for the Korean Americans must be born in the context of the Korean Americans, mature within the Korean-American context, and interpret their life experiences in terms of God's voluntary involvement in the culture. In this chapter, therefore, I will discuss the kind of culture the Korean Americans have developed in American society and what form this theology should take and how it should serve the people.

General Understandings of Culture

Definitions of Culture

The Webster's dictionary understands culture in at least six different definitions:

1. cultivation, tillage; 2. the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties esp. by education; 3. expert care and training; 4. a. enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training. b. acquaintance with taste in fine arts, humanities, and broad aspects of science as distinguished from vocational and technical skills; 5. a. the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. b. the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; 6. cultivation of living material in prepared nutrient media.²

When I saw these definitions of culture, I was shocked by the fact that "cultivation, tillage" is placed in the first position. More shocks were given to me by the second, third, and fourth definitions of culture. It seemed to me that those definitions were "offensive" to the definition of culture that I hold. Why did I find these definitions offensive? In order

² "Culture," Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 9th ed.

to find the cause of my negative feelings about them, I took a deep consideration for a while. Finally, I realized the cause originated from different viewpoints between me and the dictionary. My definition was past-oriented, whereas the dictionary is present and future-oriented.

I define culture as a combination of beliefs, traditions, and customs of a people or ethnic group. These ingredients of culture are inherited from generation to generation. Of course, the ingredients are sometimes reshaped in relationship to the needs and changes of the contemporary generation. Therefore, it cannot be justified that one considers the other's culture as heathen or savage. Culture is so sacred to its holder because the spirits of their ancestors are still breathing and inter-dialoguing with the descendants. Therefore, every culture should be respected by all.

Western Understanding of Culture

The Anglo Saxon Westerners, in my understanding, have a cultural tendency to ignore the spirits of their ancestors as well as the spirits of the ancestors of other races. The concern of Westerners is how to improve their living. However, I do not know with what type of scale they weigh the values of culture. Are newness and convenience always good? Are newness and convenience a means of measuring the values of culture? Perhaps they can be a means of valuation of the values of *their* culture but not for that of others. Yet, the Westerners often weigh other cultures with this measure. As defined in the dictionary, it seems to me, the Westerners equalize *culture* with *cultivation*. Higher culture must be more developed and cultivated. Their definition of culture is present and future-oriented. To them, therefore, cultivation is understood as an effort to escape from

“savageness” and to develop arts, science, religion, and politics to “better” the life of the present and the future.

The Westerners’ present and future-oriented understanding of culture is explicitly emphasized in Western Christianity as being combined with the white Western culture. The Western Christians have equated Christianity with the white Westernized culture. Both non-English and non-Christian cultures have been considered to be “heathen” to them. In other words, to the Western Christians, being a Christian meant ceasing all “heathen practices.”³ They have been prejudiced against non-Christian and non-English cultures because the Western culture and Christianity, they thought, were superior to these “heathen” cultures.⁴ Therefore, it is not surprising that the Native American practices were rejected after Western Christianity was introduced to them. One thing that must be mentioned here is the way of Western mission. Western Christianity often accompanies the imposition of Western culture. In other words, the mission of Western Christianity has consisted of religious and cultural colonialism and imperialism in non-Christian regions.

American Protestant Understanding of Culture

American Protestantism imitated the Western prejudice against indigenous cultural ways of other races. Without exception, according to Wesley S. Woo, American Protestantism combined the “concepts of being Christian, being American, and being civilized.”⁵ Here is a sense of American nationalistic superiority added to the Western

³ Peggy Billings, Fire Beneath the Frost: The Struggles of the Korean People and Church (New York: Friendship Press, 1984), 11.

⁴ Williams, 89.

⁵ Wesley S. Woo, “Theological Dimensions,” in Asian Pacific American Youth Ministry: Planning, Helps, and Programs, ed. Donald Ng (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988), 13.

prejudice. In American Protestantism, the Western prejudice extended to threefold superiority: American nationalism, Western culture, and Christian faith. Woo expresses the threefold superiority in American Protestantism with a short phrase, “the American cultural Christianity.” He does not see differences among the three factors of American Protestantism. Rather, to Woo, these factors are “virtually synonymous and interchangeable.”⁶ His observation of American Protestantism is right. When the American Protestant missionaries evangelized in Asia, including Korea, they spread “the American cultural Christianity in the minds of the Asian people.

The best example of “the American cultural Christianity” can be found in anti-ancestral worship teaching . In fact, filial duty was very most important for the Korean people who were greatly influenced by Confucianism. Ancestral memorial worship, in a respectful way of ancestors, was treated to be the most precise filial duty. The American Protestant missionaries who considered ancestral worship as a savage and idolatrous rite forbade the Korean Christians to keep the shamanistic rite for ancestral worship. The prejudice against ancestral worship was caused by the iconoclasm of the Protestant missionaries. Chang Sik Lee points out that the missionaries’ mistake was the partial emphasis on “be free from” but not on “be free for.” “Be free from,” according to Chang Sik Lee, is a passive attitude toward non-Christian culture, whereas “be free for” is an active attitude toward it.⁷ The missionaries asked the Korean Christians to reject ancestral worship but not to transform it into a Christian way of filial duty.

⁶ Woo, 13.

⁷ Chang Sik Lee, “Hankook Kyohoeui Hyungtaewa Kyohoe Gangshin” [The form of Korean Church and Church reform], in Shinhakkwa Hankook Kyohoe [Theology and Korean Church] (Seoul: Hansin University Publishing, 1995), 107-27.

In contrast to the American present and future-oriented definition of culture, I advocate the past-oriented definition of culture in which the existing beliefs, traditions, and customs of all races are respected and preserved. Christianity cannot be *the* supreme religion in a pluralistic world. Moreover, neither can Western/American Christianity be *the* Christianity for *all* people, nor can Western culture be *the* culture for *all* people. Christianity is indeed a form of religion which is “the substance of culture.”⁸ Therefore, the Christian faith, not the Westernized/Americanized faith, has to be adopted into the “soil” of the Native American, Asia, and other foreign cultures. In other words, Christianity has to be grafted into the existing beliefs, traditions, and customs of the indigenous peoples, and be transformed into a new form of Christianity which fits the minds and thoughts of the indigenous peoples.

Han Ridden Korean-American Culture

Perhaps, in the Korean-American culture, there are many wonderful resources which can be drawn into a new theological formation for the Korean Americans who are in the “neither/nor” and “in-between” status in American society. This project, however, does not attempt to touch all the culture of the Korean Americans. Among those cultural resources, this project discusses *han ridden culture* created by/with the Korean-American *minjung* on the *Arirang-gogae*. As *minjung* is a symbol of the Koreans in Korea and that of the Korean Americans in the United States, *Arirang-gogae* (Arirang Hill) is also a symbol of the place in which the Korean/Korean-American *minjung* gain *han*, suffer from it, and finally sublimate it. In this project, *Arirang-gogae* indicates not only the unjust

⁸ Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 42.

Korean society in the past but also the present American society in which the Korean Americans experience marginalization and discrimination. Moreover, the Arirang-gogae is not only a difficult place for the minjung to live but also a promised land for them to gain joy and happiness through a sublimation process of han.

In this project, the hanful experiences of the Koreans in Korea will be overlapped with the Korean Americans in the United States. The reason that the two are overlaid is the commonality between the situation of the Koreans in Korea and that of the Korean Americans in the United States. Both people, most Korean-American scholars believe in general, are minjung. The majority of the Korean Americans have already experienced han before they immigrated to the United States where they have also met hanful experiences. Therefore, the hanful experience of the Korean Americans in the American society is an extension of the former han encountered in the Korean society. Frankly speaking, although the Korean Americans intended to create their own culture in the American society, the foundation of their culture is the culture of the hanful Korean people in Korea. In other words, there is no Korean-American culture without the influence of the hanful Korean culture. Therefore, this project will study the Korean-American culture in relation to the Korean culture of han.

Han and the Korean Americans

First of all, what is *han*? If a Korean is presented with this question, he/she may respond like this: "I don't know. But, but it is something that remains inside of me. It is a part of me. But I can't express it exactly in words. You need to feel it, if you want to know what it is about." Many scholars have tried to define it in many ways. Tong-Hwan Moon, one of the Korean civil right movement leaders, defines han as the unquenchable

anger of the oppressed against the evil powers, the ceaseless lingering attachment of the murdered to life, and the cry of the minjung for humanistic life.”⁹ Chi Ha Kim, a priest of han, says han denotes “the minjung’s angry and sad sentiment turned inward, hardened and stuck to their hearts.” To him, han is something that “is caused as one’s outgoingness is blocked and pressed for an extended period of time by external oppression and exploitation.”¹⁰ Soon Tae Moon, a minjung writer, posits that “han is the wound of the heart in a passive term and the blood occlusion. The former is the knot of the mind and the latter is the knot of the spirit.”¹¹ Andrew Sung Park, a Korean-American theologian and associate professor of Theology at United Theological Seminary, tries to state the meaning of han very systematically.¹² He divides han into four categories: the conscious han of individuals, the unconscious han of individuals, the conscious han of groups, and the unconscious han of groups. He also finds the major causes of han in capitalist global economy, patriarchy, and unequal distribution of goods among races and cultures.

Nevertheless, no one has the exact definition of han because it is not a thing that can be expressed in words. Its character is mysterious. It is expressed sometimes with anger, but sometimes with silence. There is no static form of it, but there are differences in the depth of it. It can be exactly expressed only by feeling. It need not always be revealed with a negative feeling, but sometimes with a positive manifestation (this will be

⁹ Tong-Hwan Moon, Minjung Education on Arirang Hill (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1985), 49.

¹⁰ Chi Ha Kim, “Prison Memorandum,” cited in Andrew Park, The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 15.

¹¹ Soon Tae Moon, “Han Yi Rhan Muut Inga?” [What is Han?], in The Story of Han, 141, cited in Andrew Park, 181.

¹² See esp., Wounded Heart of God.

discussed more in the theology of han ridden culture later). It is like the mystery of God whom we cannot see and verbalize but can encounter by feeling (or dreaming). It can be shared only through *mindam*, the stories of the *enhanned*. Therefore, Young Chan Ro stresses that “[han] cannot be conceptualized, yet it must be expressed, captured, and realized” through listening to the stories that “tell what *han* is.”¹³ In this sense, for the reader, a true story of an enhanned Korean-American woman will be introduced as follows:

Young Cha Kim of Granada Hills is confined to bed with a serious depression impacted from the Earthquake in January 17, 1994. She immigrated to the United States 19 years ago. She raised up two sons: one is a college student at UC Irvine, but the other is mentally retarded. She worked hard to support her two sons. Unfortunately, the Earthquake brought her a huge calamity. That calamity was a complete destruction of not only her cleaning store but also her hope. To make the situation even worse, her doctor diagnosed her with glycosuria, a symptom of diabetes. She bewailed her misfortune and said, “I have worked hard for 17 years, and never during that time did I even buy a hamburger in order to save money. I have gotten ill due to overwork and was carried on my bed to the hospitals three times. I have cleaned and altered clothes during the day and cleaned apartments and restaurants during the night, I did my best in trying to take care of my son who is mentally retarded. But despite all my efforts, I have nothing left except this pain [*han*] within me. Why did I immigrate to the United States? What do I have to show for all the work that I have done?”¹⁴

Young Cha Kim is not the only person who gains han in the United States. There are thousands of Korean Americans who are enhanned in this society. Like Kim, many Korean Americans work hard day and night without rest. Their hard work is sometimes misunderstood by some Americans who consider these Korean Americans to be “money-

¹³ Young-Chan Ro, “Symbol, Myth, and Ritual: The Method of the Minjung,” in Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside, eds. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 47.

¹⁴ Sang Ho Ahn, “The Family at Granada Hills,” Hankkok Ilbo [Korean Times], 26 Jan. 1994, A3.

chasers.” Are they really money-chasers? Maybe some of them could rightly be called this. However, not all the hard working Korean Americans are money-chasers. They are not working for money, but for survival. They are working for their families, especially for children and for their future. Therefore, they are rather the “dream-chasers.” They are the pursuers of “the American dream”; the dream which brought them to the United States. They believed the dream still existed in the United States before they left their home country. However, it was not long before most of them realized that the dream was not a reality but just a rainbow. As time went by, the dream gradually disappeared from them. They quit chasing it. They worked in this country for survival without knowing it. They worked harder and harder for survival day and night. Their surviving was not easy for them in this society. Despite their doing best for survival, the things that they gained were the crisis of identity, the loss of volition, the sense of failure, the pain from unequal social and health treatment, and the anger against racial discrimination. Therefore, Kim says, “But despite all my efforts, I have nothing left except this pain [*han*] within me. Why did I immigrate to the United States? What do I have show for all the work that I have done?” This is not only the ejaculation of the enhanced lady, Young Cha Kim. It is the exclamation of the han of all Korean Americans who suffer from the racial discrimination, marginalization, and unjust social and political distribution in the United States.

Korean Americans on the Arirang-gogae

The United States is in fact an *Arirang-gogae* for the Korean Americans. The term, *Arirang-gogae*, came from the Korean folk song, “Arirang,” the most well-known song of the Korean people. The English translation of the song “Arirang” is as follows:

Arirang Arirang Arariyo
 Arirang crossing over the hill,
 Carrying a child on her back.
 Crossing the hill,
 How great a woman's sacrifice.
 Arirang Arirang Arariyo
 Arirang crossing over the hill,
 Carrying a heavy load.
 Crossing over the hill,
 How great an ox; what a heavy burden?¹⁵

It is a free translation but nonetheless a literal translation. I do not blame the translation for being too free from the original verses. However, a regretful thing is the slight loss of its original meaning. At least, we can understand what *Arirang-gogae* is about from this translation. There is no agreed explanation of the meaning of *Arirang*. Even the Korean people who love this song and assimilate themselves into the song during the singing of the song, do not know the meaning of it. They do not intend to know the meaning, either. They just repeatedly sing it. However, if the term *Arirang* is combined with the term *gogae*, then they *know* the meaning and *feel* it. Then what is *Arirang-gogae*? What does it mean to the Koreans and the Korean Americans? There is a fourfold meaning of *Arirang-gogae*: *Arirang-gogae* as the gaining-han place, struggling-with-han place, han-poori (han-dissolving) place, and sublimation/letting-go-han place.

First, *Arirang-gogae* is the “gaining-han place” of the Korean Americans. As indicated above, the Korean Americans left their homes, relatives, friends, and occupational places in Korea for the American dream. However, they felt they were strangers after landing in the United States. Their lack of English skills made them

¹⁵ “*Arirang-gogae*,” in Peggy Billings, et al. Fire Beneath the Frost, 76.

hesitant in approaching English speaking persons and kept them from obtaining better jobs in the white American society. As a result, as other ethnic minorities do, they gather in Korean-American ghettos for survival.¹⁶ Their effort to live as humans is heartrending. However, racial discrimination, marginalization, and unequal distribution of health care and social services have kept them from being human. Moreover, the *Sa-I-Ku Riot* (the L.A. Riot of 1992) destroyed not only their stories but also their hearts. They cried out, “Why did we come to the United States? For what did I work? How do we live from now on without our stores?”

Second, the Korean Americans struggle with han on the Arirang-gogae (on the “hill/struggle”). The Korean people call this struggle “*haneul sakineun* process (han-mitigating or swallowing process).” Han is not an immediate reaction of anger to oppression or disasters. As Chi Ha Kim describes it, it is formed in “an extended period of time.”¹⁷ In the extended period, han is accumulated. Due to the different length of time, the depth of han is various in each enhanned person. However, the length of time does not always bring the enhanned into the deeper process of the mitigating of the han. It depends upon each person’s character, religiosity, and other’s concern and care of the enhanned. This swallowing process of han is a time to find the knot that helps the han of the enhanned to be untied. Finding the knot is very difficult for the enhanned because the

¹⁶ The Korean Americans began to build ghettos in large cities such as Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago and called them “Korea Towns.” The ghettos became the places in which the Korean Americans traded what they needed for living and in which they got jobs from Korean speaking owners. In this present day, as the numbers of immigrants increase, the Korean-American ghettos grow and have become not only the centers of their survival but also the advocating places for their human rights in the United States.

¹⁷ Chi Ha Kim, “Prison Memorandum,” cited in Andrew Park, 15.

han of the enhanned is not created by just one cause but is accumulated during “an extended period of time.”

Third, Arirang-gogae is the place of *han-poori*,¹⁸ han-dissolving. The accumulated han must be dissolved. Without the dissolving of han, the Koreans/Korean Americans believes, the spirit of the enhanned cannot rest in heaven even after his/her death, remains in the world and becomes an enhanned spirit. The enhanned spirit brings the han giver and the neighbors unfortunate disasters. Therefore, if the enhanned cannot dissolve his/her han and dies with it, his/her relatives and neighbors invite *mudang* and practice *kut*.¹⁹ Sometimes, *kut* is opened by the request of the han giver. Of course, this belief and practice is non-Christian and “heathen” in the view of the Western/ American Christians.

Then how does the enhanned dissolve han when they are alive? As mentioned before, han is gradually accumulated. So it needs to be gradually dissolved. There are many ways that the enhanned dissolves his/her han. The typical approaches by the Korean people were the sharing of *mindam*,²⁰ the singing and hearing of *chang*,²¹ and the

¹⁸ In Korea, *han-poori* is a typical Korean Shamanistic element. In the Korean language, it means “han-revolving” or “letting han go away.” In the Korean Shamanistic belief, han is revolved through the voluntary act of the *enhanned* (han-given) person to let his/her han go.

¹⁹ A shaman who worships spirits and performs a *kut* ritual is a *mudang*. *Kut* is a ritual for inviting or repelling those spirits who are related with the host/hostess. It is performed by a *mudang* who dances and sings during the ritual.

²⁰ *Mindam* is a kind of Korean folklore. They are not just simply folk stories. They are the stories of a *han-ridden* people. Korean people usually name their stories *mindam*. *Min* means Minjung or people; *dam* has the meaning of stories. Therefore, *mindam* can be defined as the stories and experiences of Minjung. Minjung collected their stories and passed them from generation to generation. To the Korean people, stories are education in and of themselves because there exists philosophy, ethics, and wisdom developed and inherited throughout the thousand years of their history.

²¹ *Chang*, often called *sori* or *karak*, is a genre of traditional Korean folk music. It contains the melancholy emotion of the enhanned. A perfect singing of *chang* is possible

practicing of kut with the Mudang. However, this project does not intend to deal with all the three processes but only to discuss the sharing of mindam. The sharing of mindam is a process in which the enhanned expresses his/her han which was unknown to others but mitigated inside of him/her. It can be regarded as a positive attitude for the enhanned to share his/her hanful life experiences with others. It is the first step for the enhanned to release his/her han. At this time, the role of the listener is very important for the enhanned to be free from han. It is also the best way for the listener to share his/her han with the enhanned, too. Therefore, the best listener must be one who has already experienced han and sublimated it. Han is like a tied/restrained knot. Therefore, the enhanned needs to find the starting point of the knot which takes the enhanned to the untying process of the anger. Therefore, it is a time for the enhanned to pull the strings of a story to find the knot. Mindam sharing has the power to reveal the source of the knot to the enhanned. This process often becomes a myth-making time for the enhanned.

Fourth, Arirang-gogae is the place of sublimating/letting han go. A letting go of han differs from the giving up of han. Renunciation, in my understanding, does not take the enhanned to a sublimation of han. Han must be dissolved because han is like an unquenchable anger of the enhanned to the han giver. It cannot be simply given up. It must be sublimated and let-go by the enhanned. This sublimating/letting go takes place right after the han-revealing process or within the process. The enhanned sublimates his/her han in this place. This sublimation occurs with the change of the negative feelings of the enhanned han into a positive and productive self-esteem in it. It brings the

by the singing of a *sorikkun* (a singer of *chang*) who has experienced han and sublimated it.

enhanced to realize that his/her han is not only sorrowful but also very valuable for him/her. “A negative or passive notion implying the cumulative unresolved feeling that arises from our people’s experience of injustice,” is changed to “a positive psychological energy which can be expressed in sociopolitical power or spiritual-religious transcendence.”²² For the enhanced, therefore, han becomes like a lotus flower in the mud. Now it is an energy and power that brings the enhanced to a “new” being (Jung Young Lee describes this status of being as “new marginalized being” in Theology of Marginality). Then the enhanced transforms the sublimated han into his/her own unique identity and uses it for the development of the han/lotus culture, the so called *Seomin moonhwa* (the culture of the Korean minjung). Therefore, the han/lotus culture is loved and taken care of by the Korean minjung. The best examples of the han/lotus culture are *mindam, seolhwa* (Korean legendary literature), *minyo* (Korean folk songs: The song “Arirang-gogae” belongs to this genre), and *Chang*.

The Theology of Arirang-gogae

The Church and the Koreans on Arirang-gogae

In the beginning of the introduction of Christianity to Korea, the Korean church theology was a theology for/ by the minjung who were struggling with the hardships of the political and religious ruling group as well as with the oppression of the Japanese and other foreigners from the 1880s to 1940s. However, after the 1960s, the majority of the Korean churches were busy increasing their membership and became “anti-minjung in that they form[ed] a silent alliance with the rich and powerful.”²³ It seems that they exist no

²² Ro, 47.

²³ Billings, 24.

longer for the minjung. The conservatism and evangelical mission, which emphasized only the spiritual blessing, were regarded as orthodoxy in the Korean churches. Moreover, the Korean church in general was caught in the trend of modernization/ civilization, led by the dictator President Park, and intended to eliminate the indigenous elements of Korean culture which had still remained in the church in spite of the passionate efforts of the Western missionaries to drive them out from the church. The anti-movement of indigenous culture still exists in the present Korean/Korean-American church.

However, my question to the church is how can the church educate its members in regard to the Korean/Korean-American identity without Korean indigenous beliefs, traditions, and customs? Does the church try to plant the Westernized Christian faith in its members as the Western missionaries did before? The situation of the Korean-American church is worse. The Korean-American church is more westernized/Americanized. I do not blame the church for adopting the American ways of living from the American society. It is very natural for an immigrant to be assimilated into the host culture. However, the problem I am pointing out is the church's voluntary conversion to the Americanism which discriminates against other minorities' indigenous beliefs, traditions, and customs under the American notions of the Melting Pot and the Salad Bowl.

God does not call the Korean Americans to be westernized Korean Americans in the American society. As God called the Israelites to the sacred journey of the wilderness, God invites the Korean Americans to this Arirang-gogae. Despite racial discrimination and unjust economic distribution, this Arirang-gogae is the place in which the Korean Americans live. In spite of the painful experience of the Los Angeles riot, this Arirang-gogae is the sacred place where God calls them to live with others in peace and contribute

themselves for the sake of others. Therefore, SangHyun Lee confesses that “God is calling us to use our stranger status as an opportunity for such a sacred journey.”²⁴

With the theology of Arirang-gogae, I believe, the Korean-American church should support the sacred journey of the Korean Americans in the American society. There is no doubt that it is time for the church to create a “new” theology fitting the lives of the Korean Americans, re-interpreting their hanful experiences on this Arirang-gogae, and providing a positive and creative viewpoint from them. In my view, the theology of Arirang-gogae is the new theology that the church should look for. As described above, the Arirang-gogae is the place in which the minjung experience han, suffer from it, and sublimate it through singing, mindaming, and dancing. Arirang-gogae is not only an oppressive place but also a victorious place for the minjung through the encountering of the Incarnation and Immanuel of God in their life experiences. Therefore, the theology of Arirang-gogae is a “*theo-logy*” that seeks God engaging in the life experiences of the Korean Americans on the Arirang-gogae,²⁵ in other words, in the Korean-American culture of han.

God and Han

Before we discuss God’s relationship with the Korean Americans on the Arirang-gogae, we must clarify whether God gains han or not. The question is, “Is it possible for God to suffer from injustice and evil powers and gain from them?” If it is possible, how can God dissolve God’s han? I believe in the possibility of God gaining han in relationship

²⁴ SangHyun Lee, “How Shall We Sing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land?,” *Journal of Asia and Asian American Theology* 1 (Spring 1996): 79.

²⁵ C. S. Song, 9.

with the creation, especially with humanity. If God lives beyond the world, then our discussion should stop here. However, if we believe in the God who interacts with the creation, then we need to think about the God exposed to the possibility. Everybody possesses han in relationship with one another. But the depth of it is different in each. God gets possession of han more than we human beings do. Andrew S. Park, on the assumption of the possibility of God's han, developed his book, The Wounded Heart of God. He regards God's han to be the result of the sin of humanity against Godself, other human beings, and other creatures. God is a victim of the sinners and needs "salvation" from han. The Cross is a symbol of God's crying for salvation. However, according to him, God's salvation is achieved with the salvation of the sinners. God releases (lets-go of) God's han while forgiving the sin of the sinners on the Cross. I am really appreciative of his approach to extend the concept of han into a theological dimension. I also appreciate his stress on the dynamic relationship between the enhanced and the sinner for repentance, forgiveness, and salvation, while the traditional Christian theology has been "one-side[d], seeing the world from the perspective of sinner only."²⁶ However, I found something missing in his argument in terms of God's han-dissolving process, and I apply my understanding of God's han-dispelling process here.

I want to distinguish the concepts between the han of God and that of humanity. Humanity gains their han unwillingly due to the oppression done by other human beings or by the natural disasters; however, God experiences han both voluntarily and involuntarily. God's involuntary han results from the sin of oppressors done to other beings. On the other hand, God's voluntary han is because of God's love and mercy. God wills to take

²⁶ Andrew Park, 10.

the han of the enhanced creation. Second, God can free Godself from han through the mitigation and sublimation of han. According to Park, the salvation from han requires both the enhanced God and the sinner coming together and participating in the dynamic healing process. I partially agree with his idea. Yes, God wants the sinner to come to the healing process, if possible. However, if the sinner is no longer alive on the earth, how is the healing achieved? God's salvation from han is deeper than our human dissolution of han. God sometimes achieves God's salvation from han within the mutual relationship of the Trinity. I believe that God and the Holy Spirit were always with Jesus Christ during the Son's mission on the earth. The persecution and struggle with evil powers of Jesus Christ during his mission became the causes of han not only to Jesus Christ but to God and to the Holy Spirit as well. Therefore, God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have to participate in the salvation process together. I see the Cross as the place to untie the Trinity's han and creation's han as well. Through the salvation of the Trinity from han, the han of the enhanced and the sin of the han giver are dissolved.

God and the Korean Americans on the Arirang-gogae

As C. S. Song stresses in Telling Us Our Name: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective, the Korean-American church's theology must be "*theo-logy*."²⁷ *Theo-logy* is a task to find God in the contemporary context. Therefore, it is an effort in which we (*Korean Americans*) realize the meaning of *our* beings in relationship with God and encounter God in *our* contemporary context. We do not *theo-logize* in the Middle Ages or in the time of the future. Song speaks of that theology as not neutral but historical and

²⁷ C. S. Song, 9.

cultural. “A neutral theology is a homeless theology. It does not belong anywhere.”²⁸ We do *theo*-logize in our contemporary context. Furthermore, we do not *theo*-logize in either the Korean context nor in the American context. The subject of our *theo*-logy is the Korean-American contemporary context.

Theo already existed from the beginning before we started to theologize. I believe that “I am who I am” (Exod. 3:14, NIV) does not mean God’s beyondness, sacredness, and distinctness from us. But it is God’s invitation for us to the query of God. I interpret “I am that I am” as follows. “I was not who I was. I will not be who I will be. But I am who I am now.” God commanded Moses to teach the Israelites that God, who has stayed with the Israelites from the beginning, *is* with the Israelites in the present. The journey of the Israelites can be understood as the journey of *theo*-seeking in the wilderness. See Exodus 17:1-7: “Is God among us or not?” (v. 7). Moses blamed the Israelites for putting God to the test (v. 2). However, God’s understanding of the complaint of the Israelites differs from that of Moses. God saw their question as a means of *theo*-seeking and revealed God’s presence--“I will stand there” (v.6)--through the miracle of Meribah, drawing water out from a rock.

The question, “Is God among us or not?” has to be raised by the Korean Americans on the Arirang-gogae everyday, and the church should help them to find God in their life experiences. Therefore, we (Korean Americans) need to bring Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit into our Korean-American context. We need to interpret the Bible with/in the Korean-American context. We need to take the biblical symbols down to the dimension of our understanding. The symbols that cannot be interpreted by our

²⁸ C. S. Song, 11.

Koran-American comprehension do not influence our Christian faith formation. God incarnated in order to be familiar to creation. It was very difficult for creation to apprehended God who was on the throne in heaven, so God came down to the world. This is the purpose of God's Incarnation in Jesus Christ.

The Arirang-gogae is the place in which God incarnates into the lives of the enhanned Korean-American. As Delores Williams believes, God's incarnation in Jesus Christ can be considered "as a continuum of the manifestation of divine spirit"²⁹ in the lives of all creation, including the Korean Americans. God prefers the oppressed and the enhanned. God indeed incarnated into them and set them free from their bondage of han.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisons and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19, NIV)

God's incarnation in Jesus Christ indicates God's voluntary participation in the hanful experience of the Korean Americans. Traditional prophetic (nonincarnational) monotheism holds to divine impassability assuming that God exists beyond suffering. In this monotheism, suffering is generally understood only in a human dimension. Perhaps, Calvin, with this monotheistic viewpoint, claimed that only the human nature of Christ experienced the suffering of death on the Cross.³⁰ However, this monotheistic idea is widely challenged by contemporary religious people and is fortunately no longer accepted in contemporary thought. One prominent contemporary Christian thinker, Jurgen

²⁹ Williams, 168.

³⁰ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol 1, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1: 465-66.

Moltmann, has developed a theology of divine suffering of creature.³¹ In his understanding, throughout Christ's self-sacrifice, God experienced the pain and hatred of the creation and participated in the anguish of death on the Cross. Moltmann is right in his saying. The idea of divine suffering is based on the Scripture. God came to be a friend who would suffer with the enhanned Koran-Americans and fight against the evil powers on this Arirang-gogae. God's Incarnation was not a glorification, but a humiliation and a servanthood ministry with/in the Korean Americans.

The Immanuel of God symbolizes God's voluntary involvement in our *han-poori* process on the Arirang-gogae. As the Incarnation is God's ministry of servanthood and humiliation for the enhanned Korean Americans; God's Immanuel ministry is the ministry of hope for the enhanned. The ministry brings hope to God's beloved beings. It gives hope that, even though we are subject to han and suffering, God is always in our hanful experience. God knows the depth of our han because God dwells with/in us and experiences our han by Godself. Immanuel means "God with us." God is with us; God is present in us; We are invited to an encounter with God. God comes to us and listens to our hanful stories, mindam. When we tell our mindam to God, God very carefully listens to us. On the other hand, God responds to us with the hanful story of God manifested in the Old Testament and the New Testament. This inter-dialogue between God and us leads us to the clue which takes us into the han-sublimation. After we have encountered God and resolved our han through the inter-dialogue, we no longer consider han as a negative and destructive reality. No matter how deep our han comes to us later, we are able to

³¹ Jurgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology, trans. Margaret Kohl (1977; reprint, Minneapolis: Fortress Press,

sublimate it because of God's Immanuel in/with us. We become a new being who is no longer under the bondage of the passive and destructive feeling of han.

The Immanuel ministry invites the enhanced Korean Americans to the *han-poori* process of other beings. There are many beings who suffer alone in the world without care. They are shocked by strong feelings of isolation, meaninglessness, and loss of personal identity. They feel alienated by the American society. They become hopeless. They often feel abandoned by God and others. The Korean Americans are called to be like the runners of the Olympic sacred-fire relay. They bring the holy fire, the hope of the Immanuel of God, the hope of the presence of God, to the marginalized and lonely place where the isolated and hopeless suffer. They deliver the holy fire to the angry and rebellious so that the fire melts their anger and rebellion.

In conclusion, the experience of Korean Americans in the United States can be portrayed as the hanful living on the Arirang-gogae. However, there is a wisdom of Korean Americans who transform evil into good. Although they gain han in the discriminated American society, they struggle with it, dissolve it, and finally sublimate it to something good in the society. In this chapter, I suggested the theology of Arirang-gogae which brings this wisdom into the Korean-American church. This theology of Arirang-gogae is not implanting a passive attitude toward evil things but a positive spirit to the minds of Korean Americans who are struggling with discrimination and difficulties in this society. This theology seeks the God who incarnates into the lives of Korean Americans, suffers with their han, and goes with them to the end of han sublimation process.

Press, 1993), 86.

CHAPTER 4

Mindam Sharing Education for the Korean-American Christians

This chapter is intended to graft the traditional Korean mindam sharing into a new theological formation which helps the Korean Americans to re-interpret their han obtained on *Arirang-gogae*. As I already discussed in the previous chapter, *Arirang-gogae* (Arirang Hill) is also a symbol of the place in which the Korean/Korean-American minjung gain han, suffer from it, and finally sublimate it. In this project, *Arirang-gogae* indicates not only the unjust Korean society in the past but also the present American society in which the Korean Americans experience marginalization and discrimination. Moreover, *Arirang-gogae* is not only a difficult place for the minjung to live but also a promised land for them to gain joy and happiness through a sublimation process of han. Through the new theological understanding, the *Arirang-gogae* is understood not any longer a passive place but as a blessed place in which God meets the enhanned Korean Americans, suffers with them, and brings them to the liberation from han.

Based on this new theological understanding, this chapter will attempt to create an applicable educational theory. The new educational theory must meet two ultimate goals for the enhanned Korean Americans who are struggling in the United States. The first goal is to take the Korean Americans to a productive view of their hanful life experiences; and the second is to lead them to develop a positive Korean-American identity building process in the United States. In other words, the new education has to be suitable to lead the enhanned Korean Americans to the *han-poori* process (han-resolving process) and make them authentic beings in the American society. I, with a belief that a consistent adherence to one's root brings a positive life to one's personal life in a foreign land,

believe a mindam sharing education, with its Korean cultural/educational elements, to be the best educational example leading the Korean Americans to the ultimate goals.

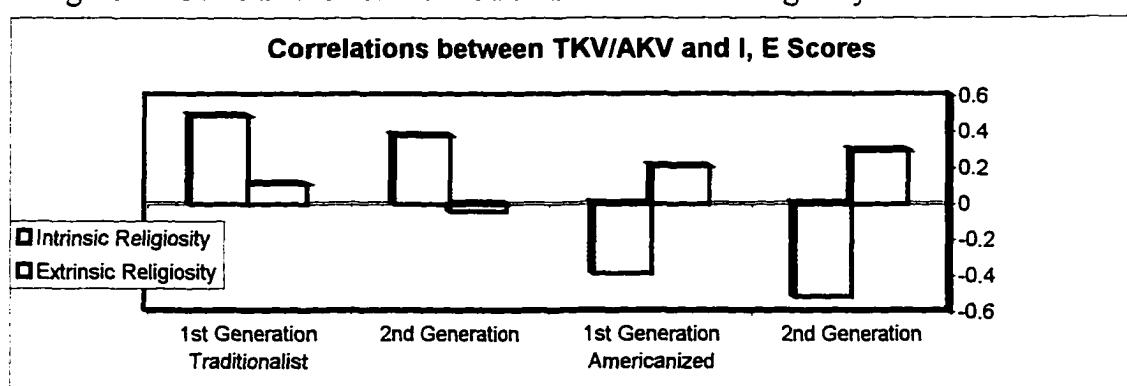
Reasons to Bring Korean Cultural Elements to Korean-American Church Education

Today's Korean-American church leaders wonder whether church education should bring Korean culture into the education of the younger Korean-American generation who are already familiar with the United States culture. Some educators worry that if the children learn Korean culture, the children may be pushed out in the competitive American society unprepared. The education of Korean culture, they think, is not necessary for the children because they are not Koreans any longer after their emigration from Korea or their birth in the United States. On the other side, many other educators believe that Korean culture may help the children to keep Korean identity and inherit strong Christian faith from their parents. Therefore, they insist not only on education on the imitation of Christ, but also the preservation of Korean culture in the Sunday school. Which side is correct? Personally I prefer the latter for the following reasons.

Yong Soo Hyun, having much interest in religious education for Korean Americans, emphasizes "Koreanization" in Korean-American church education. As I observed in the Introduction, according to Hyun, there are four groups of Korean Americans in the USA. The first group are traditionalists who refuse to be assimilated. The second group are bi-culturalists who adopt Korean culture and American culture without difficulties. The third group are neo-Koreans who are uncomfortable with the two cultures and have created a new Korean-American culture, the so called "neo-Korean culture." The last group are assimilationists or Americanized Koreans who reject the traditional Korean culture and adopt only the American culture and values. After

comparing the relationship between the cultural adherence and religiosity among the four Korean-American groups, Hyun made two important conclusions for the Korean-American church. The first is that, regardless of the generation, the intrinsic religiosity of the Korean-American traditionalists is incomparably higher than that of the Americanized Korean Americans, whereas the extrinsic religiosity of the two groups is vise versa.¹ (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4. Correlations between Cultural Values and Religiosity



TKV: Traditional Korean Cultural Value

AKV: Americanized Korean Cultural Value

I: Intrinsic Religiosity (Intrinsic religiosity like that of St. Paul)

E: Extrinsic Religiosity (extrinsic religiosity like that of Pharisees)

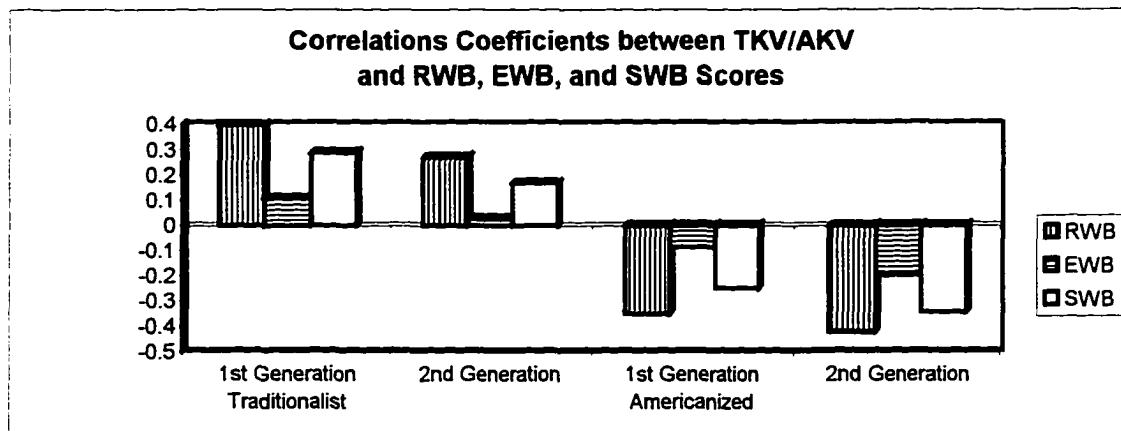
The second conclusion made by Hyun is that, regardless of generation, those persons who hold traditional Korean cultural values possess a much more healthy spirituality than those persons who try to assimilate themselves into American culture and values.² Hyun presupposed that healthy spirituality or “spiritual well-being (SWB)” is made by a relationship between “religious well-being (RWB)” and “existential well-being (EWB).” “Religious well-being” deals with the vertical dimension of spirituality in

¹ Hyun, 166-68.

² Hyun, 166-69.

relation to God; “existential well-being” is about the horizontal dimension of well-being in relation to the world; therefore, “spiritual well-being” is about concerns of God and one’s life purpose and life satisfaction in the relationship between RWB and EWB.³

Figure 5. Correlations Coefficients between Cultural Values and Religious, Existential, and Spiritual Well-Being Scores



If Hyun’s observation is true, what brings the Korean-American traditionalists to the most positive life style and faithful religiosity in the United States? As Hyun mentioned in his book, I believe that a consistent belongingness to their roots creates a positive religious life in them.⁴ The person realizing his or her origin knows where he/she is and where he/she is going.

Reasons to Apply Mindam Sharing in Church Education

If the reader asks, “Why should a mindam sharing be applied in Korean-American church education?,” I will give two responses to the reader. First, a mindam sharing offers commonality that brings the first Korean-American generation and the younger Korean-American generation to one place. In general, a story builds a bridge between the teller and the hearer. Most stories are enjoyable for everyone, no matter what age group or

³ Hyun, 255-56.

⁴ Hyun, 176.

gender a person belongs to. If the story is relevant to the hearer, it is more enjoyable for the hearer. What kind of stories should be offered to Korean Americans? I consider mindam the best for the purpose outlined in this project. As a story is a reflection of a person's life experience, mindam is the reflection of the *hanful* experiences of Korean (Korean-American) people. According to Young-Chan Ro, "mindam is the house of *han* in which the spirit of the minjung dwells. . . . The han of the minjung is incarnated in mindam."⁵ He is right. Mindam is a crystal made through the han-sublimation process. Therefore, mindam is more interesting not only to the people in Korea but also to the Korean Americans in the USA.

The second reason to take mindam sharing into church education is because of the power of mindam that involves the hearer in the *sharing process*. While listening to others' mindam, the hearer connects the offered mindam to his/her own life experience, making his or her experience another mindam, and offering it to the partner. For many educational scholars, including especially Thomas H. Groome, education (*educere* in Latin) is a process of "leading out" from the past, from the present, and toward the future.⁶ They mean that an educational goal cannot be focused on any particular point of time and place. Education must consider the past, present and future of the students. In this sense, what can bring out the enhanced Korean Americans from the past to the present and to the future? Mindam is the product of the history of their ancestors and their own, isn't it? Furthermore, in the church setting, what can bring the passing

⁵ Ro, 48.

⁶ Thomas H. Groome, Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision (New York.: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980), 5-12.

generation and the following generation into one place? Mindam. Mindam has power to integrate the faith of the first generation with the younger generation.

According to Maria Harris, a congregation *is* a curriculum.⁷ In this sense, mindam, the stories of Korean Americans, is a source of the church's educational curriculum because it represents not only their past and present living situations in the American society but also their needs and hopes in the present and future American society. The life experiences of the Korean Americans should be the source of the curriculum as well as the curriculum itself. Maria Harris's idea that the "congregation is a curriculum" is not a new idea in traditional mindam sharing education.⁸ In mindam sharing education, the experiences of the minjung were always considered as the source of the curriculum and the minjung themselves as the subjects/objects of the education.

Mindam Sharing Education for the Positive Identity Building of Korean Americans

The mindam sharing education developed by this project is very similar to the idea of "the shared praxis Christian education" created by Thomas Groome.⁹ The shared

⁷ Maria Harris, Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 174.

⁸ Harris, 174.

⁹ The "shared praxis Christian education" has five pedagogical movements: 1) "The participants are invited to name their own activity concerning the topic for attention (present action)"; 2) "They are invited to reflect on why they do what they do, and what the likely or intended consequences of their actions are (critical reflection)"; 3) "The educator makes present to the group the Christian community Story concerning the topic at hand and the faith response it invites (Story and its Vision)"; 4) "The participants are invited to appropriate the Story to their lives in a dialectic with their own stories (dialectic between Story and stories)"; and 5) "There is an opportunity to choose a personal faith responses for the future (dialectic between Vision and visions)." Groome, Christian Religious Education, 207-08.

The term *praxis* used by Thomas Groome frequently throughout his educational books, Christian Religious Education and Sharing Faith, can be understood as "reflective

praxis Christian education stimulates communal dynamics taking place between the teacher and the learner and brings the Christian Story/Vision into the story/vision sharing event of the participants. On the other hand, the mindam sharing education also puts stress on a gradual and mutual healing process through dynamic dialogues between the enhanned and the helper and sometimes between the enhanned and the han-giver. The mindam sharing education, of course, did not bring the Christian Story/Vision into its education in Korean ancestral times, for Christianity was introduced to the Korean people lately (actually, Catholicism two centuries ago: Protestantism one century ago).

However, there were attempts to connect Korean cultural elements to Korean church theology and education after the 1960s. The first effort was done by the Tochakwha (indigenous) theologians. The Tochakwha theologians set two ultimate goals: the first was the incorporation of traditional Korean culture into Christianity; the other is to bring Christian theologies and other indigenous religions (such as Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Chondokyo) into dialogue.¹⁰ The next attempt was led by Minjung theologians bringing to the church the stories of the minjung created under the economically and politically dehumanizing conditions in Korea. However, their approaches failed to call forth a response in the conservative and evangelical minds of those Korean Christians who considered the attempts of the two groups too radical.

action' which is practice that is informed by theoretical reflection, or, conversely, a theoretical reflection that is informed by practice." Moreover, according to the author, "[T]he *term* praxis attempts to keep theory and practice together as dual and mutual enriching moments of the same intentional human activity." See Christian Religious Education, xvii.

¹⁰ Chondokyo has developed on the faith of Tonghakkyo. Tongshik Ryu, Christian Faith Encounters Religions of Korea (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1991), 14.

However, their expectation of radical changes in the church and the gap between the academia and the contemporary situation of the local churches made the Korean Christians reject their attempts. Their attempts to plant Christian faith on the base of Korean culture were initiated from the top to bottom. For example, the Tochakwha theologians put emphasis on the inter-religious dialogue between Christianity and other Korean indigenous religions, whereas the Minjung theologians were biased by the stories of the suffering minjung as a tool in the anti-government and anti-dictatorship movement. What they anticipated was different from what the minjung really looked for. The theologians sought for ideological and political changes, whereas the minjung waited for something tangible and practical. Therefore, it can be said that the Korean religious academy did not satisfy the need of the contemporary Korean Christians.

The mindam sharing education introduced in this project, in contrast to the “political” education of Tochakwha theology and Minjung theology, is a *seomin* (minjung)-oriented education. It begins with/by the minjung in their own contemporary contexts. Of course, its ultimate purpose is the ideal society, the so called “Kingdom of God,” realized on earth. However, it does not long for a radical change of society but a gradual change through the change of the minjung themselves, for it presupposes that the society is modified when the subject of the society is changed. How then is the subject of society changed? Namely, what changes the minjung? Tochakwha theology and Minjung theology, in my opinion, gave good answers for these questions theoretically but not practically. Theoretically, Minjung theology made the minjung the subjects of their society and history, whereas Tochakwha theology enlightened the minjung to see Korean indigenous culture as the soil of their faith. In this following section, as a person who

admires their thoughtful insights, I want to bring their insights into the Korean-American church education and suggest how to practice those ideas in the *mindam sharing* education.

In addition, I have to make two confessions about the *mindam* education which I am going to introduce. The first is that it is not easy to trace to its historical root, for a systematic study of this education has not been done seriously yet. Also nobody has ever used the term *mindam sharing education* before. I created it. However, the education has been practiced in/by the minjung at home or among individuals continuously and helped the minjung to overcome their han throughout Korean history. The second confession is that the format of the *mindam* sharing education is greatly influenced by the shared praxis education of Thomas Groome. Realizing oneself through *mindam* sharing, encountering God through the reflection of one's *mindam* in relation to the biblical story, and creating a new form of identity are the gradual steps of the education.

Before going into the main discussion of *mindam* sharing education, by the way, I want to introduce a practical example of *mindam* sharing education. This education took place at the City of Hope Medical Center in the city of Duarte, California, where I worked as a student chaplain from August, 1995 to May, 1996. I met many cancer patients at the hospital during the chaplain service. However, among those patients, I had a special relationship with two persons: a 17-year-old boy and his mother. The following is the story of the specific *mindam* sharing experience.

One day, I visited the patients at the City of Hope Medical Center. As soon as I entered the pediatric wing, I met a mother whose only son had suffered from a white blood leukemia cancer for two years. The cancer in the body of the son was very rare, so it was unexplainable and incurable by even modern medical science. The doctors at the center said the son could die before a bone marrow transplant could be given to him. So

they recommended them to stop even chemo therapy and to spend their last moments together some-where.

Regardless of his condition, the cancer he had was very interesting to the center for research. But it was very painful for the mother and the son. Since I began working there, the son became my favorite patient. The reason was not only because we could meet each other frequently, but also because they were Korean and were able to speak Korean, my native language. The mother and the son were very religious with deep faith in God and were enduring pain, caused by not only cancer itself but also by chemo. Therefore, whenever I visited them, they confessed their strong trust in God and expressed their thanks to God for unchangeable mercy and continuous care.

When I met her one afternoon, however, she questioned, "Chaplain, is God with my son, Philip?" I was surprised at hearing such a question from her. I was embarrassed and could not give any helpful answer to her at that moment. I just kept silent. I closed my eyes and tried to find a suitable answer for her question. Then she continued saying, "Recently I doubt God's presence with Philip." I still could not come up with an answer for her. So instead of giving her an answer, I rather replied with a question, "Is that your real question? Why do you ask me that question?" She responded to my question with various subjects. At the end of our conversation, I gave her a Bible passage to read. It was a story of "The Miracle of Meribah" in Exodus 17:1-7. In the story, the Israelites questioned whether God was among them or not. And then God showed them God's presence through drawing water out from a rock at Horeb. I told her to read the passage and discuss it at our next visit.

One week later I visited her and her son again. At that time, the son was in critical condition and about to die. I could see the shadow of death from the painful face of the son. The son was suffering extremely from pain. The mother was sitting on a chair holding the son's left hand with both of her hands. The son could not open his eyes but just expressed pain. He was indeed unconscious. About ten minutes later, as a nurse came in the room, the mother smoothly dropped her son's hand and asked me to go out to talk.

After we sat on a bench outside of the room, she threw me a question, "Chaplain, I am asking you personally. Do *you* believe that God is with my son?" I had thought many things during the past week about that conversation and gained some beautiful pastoral advice from the meditation. However, her question was not what I had expected. Neither was she asking a chaplain nor God. It was asking me. I was astonished at the question. But I controlled my feelings, took a short pause, and prayed to God. I finally opened my eyes and began telling her my painful experience in my past (the loss of parents at an early age, the sad life in an orphanage, God's continuous guidance and concern during the orphanage times, the smile-the best gift of God for me, how to graduate from a university despite economic difficulty, etc.). At each point, I never forgot to place emphasis on God's unchangeable love and presence with me throughout the painful experiences.

While hearing from me, she swept tears from her eyes with her hands. Finally when I concluded my story (mindam) sharing, she thanked me for sharing my personal stories with her. As I had never expected her to throw a question to *me*, she also never expected me to share *my* stories. She pointed out why my smile contained something precious and meaningful to her and her son. She confessed to me that whenever I had

visited and left her and her son, the son asked her how the chaplain could smile like that. He guessed the chaplain had never had painful experiences in his life and that's why he could smile always. She told me that she finally became convinced of God's presence with her son and his pain.

Two days later, the son died. I got the news on the following day. I participated in the funeral service. I gave a last farewell to my lovely friend who was sleeping in a coffin. I approached the mother standing at the exit. I expressed my sorrow for her and the son, but I never forgot to give a smile to her after expressing sorrow. She responded to my smile with another smile and requested me to wait for her outside. A few minutes later she came to me and thanked me again for everything I have done for her and her son. She told me that the son also cried when he was told about my stories from his mother. She also made me pleased with the victorious death of the son. According to her, the son was praying and praising God when he left his mother behind.

Realizing Oneself through Mindam Sharing

Many Korean Americans are confused about their identity in the United States. They were boastful of being "Korean."¹¹ When they immigrated to the United States at first, therefore, they thought they would keep their Korean identity in this foreign society and pushed their children to keep Korean identity. However, as time passed by, they were exposed to the American notions of the Melting Pot and the Salad Bowl and gradually lost their Korean identity. They exist neither as Koreans nor Americans in the United States. They do not know who they are. On the other hand, the younger generation of Korean Americans believe themselves to be Americans before they fully became grown-ups who have to work for survival. When they were young, they did not realize the meaning of ethnic identity. They believed that persons of all ethnicity had to be equal in the United States as it is manifested in the Constitution. They can speak English fluently and get along with other ethnic friends including white Americans. However, during the college

¹¹ Chang and Kim, 170.

period, they begin to realize their difference from others.¹² They feel something different from other ethnic groups, especially from white Americans. They do not know why.

Without knowing why, they struggle with their identity and take a passive attitude, hoping that something will happen in the future. They become the prototype of “unauthentic beings” in the United States. The *unauthentic* beings, used by Paulo Freire, are those passive persons who “live in duality in which *to be* is to *be like*, and *to be like* is *to be like oppressor*” [emphasis in original].¹³ They are not conscious of their identity, nor their purpose of being in this country. Sometimes they do not realize they are the victims of the American notions of the Melting Pot and the Salad Bowl. Nor do they apprehend the discrimination and injustice which are prevalent in the society. Although they are unjustly treated, they are not angry. Actually they cannot give vent to their indignation, for they are unauthentic beings who just meet discrimination and injustice with resignation. They are just *enhanned* without crying out against the evil powers. Therefore, they simply take “self-depreciation,” one of the typical characteristics of unauthentic oppressed beings.¹⁴

On other hand, the Korean-American church cannot find a proper solution for the problem of the unauthentic enhanced Korean Americans. The church is aware of the seriousness of the problem but does not know how to solve it. Consequently, the main work of the church for the enhanced beings is to bind up their wound. The sermons delivered in the Korean-American church, therefore, are mainly messages of comfort and

¹² Chang and Kim, 170.

¹³ Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1994), 30.

¹⁴ Freire, 45.

of spiritual peace. Those sermons are tremendously helpful for the wounded. However they cannot be a means of the healing for the han that is stimulated in the deepest heart of the enhanned. As described in the previous chapter, han is not such a thing that disappears through comforting or the passing of time. Han is an entangled knot that cannot be untied without finding the clue to it. If it is not resolved in the right direction, for the enhanned it becomes a passive emotion that continuously torments the victim until it is resolved.

Therefore, it must be released from the enhanned.

How do the enhanned come out of a passive attitude of han and an unauthentic attitude of themselves. The mindam sharing education, I certainly believe, has the function to carry out this mission for the enhanned. The *han-poori* process (han-resolving process) of mindam can help the enhanned not only to become authentic beings but also to resolve their entangled han. First, a mindam sharing “conscientizes”¹⁵ the unauthentic being, the subject of the mindam sharing education. A mindam sharing is a hanful story sharing. Sharing a hanful story means revealing an experience of unjust and discriminatory treatment to others. As mentioned earlier, mindam has the power to bring the listener into sharing. When the conscientized person/teacher tells his/her personal mindam, the listener relates his/her own experience to the story and creates another mindam to share. This realization of one’s being oppressed under evil powers is the first step for the suffering person to overcome his or her unauthentic attitude.

Second, a mindam sharing helps the enhanned to see suffering as a reality that the enhanned has to embrace and mitigate (struggle with). The Korean people usually teach

¹⁵ “Conscientization refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.” Freire, 17.

their children how to endure during difficult situations and how to mitigate their pain (han). To the western thinkers, whose culture emphasizes hero/heroine/and conquer/success/victory, their teaching might be considered a passive attitude toward difficulties and evil powers. Therefore, Westerners have a tendency to treat suffering as bad and evil. However, Koreans do not regard suffering negatively at all because it is a part of their lives throughout their history. It is a reality that they have to embrace, struggle with, and overcome. Therefore, their attitude toward suffering must be considered a “realistic” and “sagacious” attitude. This was also the attitude of Jesus toward human sufferings when he carried out his mission in the world. Jesus never denied the reality of suffering but went into human suffering and struggled against it throughout his mission.

Encountering God through the Reflection on One’s Mindam and Biblical Story

Encountering God through reflection on one’s mindam and the biblical story is an important part of mindam Christian education. It is a time that the enhanned interpret their suffering in relationship to the biblical narrative. In the terms of Thomas Groome, it is a time when the enhanned person is invited to reflect on his/her hanful experience in light of the biblical “Story.” The biblical Story serves as a critique of the enhanned person’s present experience and serves as a guide for future action. The enhanned person reflects on his/her story in the light of the Story and finds clues to release himself/herself from the entangled han. In this reflection, the hanful experience of the enhanned person can be interpreted as the sacred journeys of the biblical figures. For example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the experience of the Korean Americans on the Arirang-gogae (the unjust and discriminating American society) can be represented as the

persecutions of the Israelites under the Egyptians and their painful experiences in the wilderness after the Exodus. The Words of God given to the biblical prophets can be the words spoken to the Korean Americans.

On the other hand, mindam sharing becomes a means for the transformation of the han/suffering of the enhanned to “salvific han/suffering.” It is a time that the enhanned encounter God who is voluntarily involved in human sufferings. The Incarnation is interpreted as God’s voluntary involvement in the pain of the enhanned; the Immanuel explains the meaning of God’s presence with the enhanned. Moreover, Jesus Christ is introduced to the enhanned not only as the Suffering Servant, but also as the Survival. The Suffering Servant indicates God’s participation in the *han-poori* process (han-resolving process) of the enhanned; the Survival stands for God’s cooperation in the han-sublimation-process of the enhanned. Therefore, suffering/han is understood as a means for the enhanned to meet God.

Creating a New Form of Identity

The last step of mindam sharing education is to create a new identity for the han-sublimated person. Usually the Korean people who completed this *han-poori* process have a very positive and creative life in the future. However, they are not boastful of what they have done in the past but very humble and compassionate toward the han of others. The han that they went through is so precious that they put it in the *seomin moonwha* (the culture of the minjung) and create another *mindam*, *mynyo*, and *chang*.

What kind of a new identity do the han-sublimated Korean Americans create in the United States? Unlike people in Korea, the Korean Americans live with various ethnic groups in a foreign country. They are not the host in his country either. There is no

guarantee that they will be free from marginalization and discrimination in the future. As Jung Young Lee asks in Marginality, do we have to keep our status as marginal people?

I do not know what types of a new identity are the best models for the Korean Americans of this day, yet. However, one thing that I am convinced of is that we, the Korean Americans, are called by God to a sacred journey on this Arirang-gogae. However, we are not the only pilgrims on this journey; other different ethnic peoples are also invited to journey with us. In other words, we are all in the same boat for the sacred journey. Conflicts occur among us due to misunderstandings; marginalization, racial discrimination, and social and political injustice are practiced due to someone's centrism (eg. American centrism). However, we all agree that this boat is the very place in which multi-cultural and multi-religious dialogues should be practiced. Each of us is called to contribute his or her own uniqueness to the creation of the "Mosaic" (the Ideal America/Kingdom of God) in this land. No ethnic uniqueness should be ignored in this Mosaic because each has something that could be helpful in the fulfillment of the Mosaic. Therefore, in order to contribute the Korean-American uniqueness to the creation of the Mosaic, we Korean Americans have to find our unique identity, the Korean-American identity. The term "Korean-American" is not simply a title by which we are called. But it is what we are in the present and what we are going to be in the future.

In conclusion, the Korean-American identity is a gift of God. This identity can be planted in the minds of the Korean Americans through church education: church education not created by foreigners who do not know about Korean Americans and their culture. The education must be brought into being by the Korean Americans who are the subjects/objects of the creation. Therefore, the education cannot separate itself from the

influence of their life experience and culture. Fortunately Korean-American culture, interwoven with traditional Korean culture, has beautiful educational resources. The mindam sharing education is a very tiny example of the indigenous culture. In the culture there are many more resources available for the identity education of the Korean Americans. Of course, Shamanist, Buddhist, and Confucian elements exist as cultural resources. However, those elements should not be treated as "heathen" as Western missionaries did in the past. They are the inheritance of their ancestral culture as well as the spirits of the ancestors. Therefore, they are the very things that the Koreans/Korean Americans should embrace to develop their unique identity/faith on them. This unique identity/faith is what God is looking for from them and what the Korean Americans can contribute themselves to the creation of the Mosaic (the Ideal America/Kingdom of God) in American society.

CHAPTER 5

Implication of Mindam Sharing in Church Education

In the previous chapters, I have mentioned the need for new theological and educational understandings of the Korean-American church for the hanful life experiences of the Korean Americans on the Arirang-gogae. I have stressed that the church's theology must be a *theo-logy* that helps the members to encounter God in the midst of their hanful experiences on the Arirang-gogae. In the understandings of the *theo-logy*, God is not beyond the lives of the Korean Americans but incarnates to their lives, voluntarily takes their pain and han, and goes with them to the sublimation of han. Furthermore, the church should teach the *theo-logy* of the Korean-American Christians and lead them into a positive Korean-American identity building process, despite their daily hanful experiences on the Arirang-gogae. I have suggested to the church three purposes of mindam sharing education: (1) realizing oneself through mindam sharing, (2) encountering God through the reflection of one's mindam with the biblical story, and (3) creating a new form of identity. The reader may wonder how such new theological and educational theories can be practiced in the church. Therefore, in this last chapter, I will present the reader some concrete examples of mindam sharing education that can be implemented in church education, in relation to the Los Angeles riot.

The reason to design a presentation of mindam sharing education in relation to the Los Angeles riot is that, I am strongly convinced, it is the very time for the church to re-interpret the riot theologically and to re-educate the victims. Someone may think that it is too late to discuss the riot at this point. However, the reason I pull the event into this presentation is not only that the after effect of the riot still remains in the hearts of many

victims in the Korean-American community, but also that the riot could be a common ground that could bring the first and the following generation into one place because it effected almost all Korean Americans regardless of the differences of age and gender. The riot was the worst experience for the immigrants, but it can be God's blessing for them because it can be the new starting point for them.

Then how can it be God's blessing and a new starting point for them? This presentation responds to the question through reinterpreting biblical symbols such as pilgrimage, Galilee, wilderness, struggle, liberation, and the promised land, and relates these symbols to the hanful life experiences of the Korean Americans in the United States. I have seen so many Korean-American victims of the riot who could not sublimate their han but still struggle with it. Their han is more than passive. It is destructive. It ruins not only their will to recovery but also their souls. The best example can be found from the tragic suicide of Shin Dal Kang whose son had attempted to across the Pacific in a yacht. The son, Dong Suk Kang, was a symbol of Korean Americans and was expected to fulfill his mission not only by his parents but also by all Korean Americans. However, after his father lost his gas stations and swap meet store during the riot and could not get out of economical difficulties and hanful memories, the father killed himself with a gun. His death resulted in the son stopping his journey and returning home. The father actually was a respectable Christian who continued to participate in the early prayer service and never lost his smile in front of the church members. Therefore, his pastor and church members did not realize that his pain and han were so deep as to take his life away.¹

¹ Jung In Lee, "Burning of Four Gas Stations and Swap Meet," Hankook Ilbo [Korean Times], 5 Apr. 1996, A2.

I do not see the death of Shin Dal Kang just as a personal/family tragedy but the general Korean-American church's tragedy. The conservative Korean-American church in general has a tendency to stress absolute trust in God. I do not claim that this stress is bad. However, what I am trying to point out is this emphasis of the church tends to ignore the causes of the hanful life experiences of its members and their *humanistic* feelings. The members are forced just to swallow their hanful experiences and feelings. Therefore, to be a good Christian like Shin Dal Kang sometimes means to hide one's feelings and to pretend to be holy and pious. Therefore, a good Christian is supposed to put one's absolute trust in God's hand, not telling nor expressing his or her anger and doubt. Shin Dal Kang was the typical good Christian in the church. However, what was the result of the stress on absolute trust in God, while not telling nor expressing one's feelings in the church?

However, in contrast to this, I believe that the church should be a place of the expressing, sharing, and sublimating of the han of its members. There is a Korean proverb, "If sorrow is shared, it becomes half; if joy is shared, it produces twice." Han must be expressed, shared, and sublimated in the church. The church is called to the Korean-American community for this purpose. As Jesus Christ came to the people of Galilee and invited them to him to share their han, the church has to take after its Master's mission for the Korean Americans on this Arirang-gogae.

In this presentation, as mentioned in the previous chapter, I will suggest three tasks of the church which should take place for the Korean-American victims of the riot. The first task of the church is to encourage them to express their anger and han. This is the process of one's realization of where one belongs and for what and why one struggles on

the Arirang-gogae. The second task of the church is to bring the biblical symbols to the life experiences of the members: that is, in the shared praxis education of Thomas Groome, to suggest the Bible Story/Vision to the participants, and to lead the members to encounter God who is voluntarily involved in their hanful experiences on the Arirang-gogae. The last task is to help the members to create a positive and creative identity; that is, the Korean-American Christian identity on the Arirang-gogae.

The education series I propose consists of four sessions: “Naming My Name”; “God Called Me out into the Wilderness”; “Is God among Us or Not?”; and “A New People with A New Covenant.” Since it is designed for an intensive seminar (a kind of teacher’s training), the entire session will take two days (at least three to four hours for each session). Everyone interested in Korean-American church education will be welcomed to the seminar. However if there is space limitation, priority will be given to the Korean-American church educators. In my opinion, the sufficient size of the class will be 8 to 10 persons. One more thing I need to mention is that I am not going to provide the church with *the standard shape of mindam sharing education* in this project because there exists no standard model of it. What I am going to present are just simple examples of mindam sharing education. Each Korean-American church educator needs to find stories from the congregation and bring them into the church education and create a proper model of mindam sharing education for them based upon the specific need of the congregation.

The first session will be an example of how the church teaches Korean/Korean-American cultural elements to the Korean Americans, especially to the younger generation, through remembering the meaning of their Korean (native) names. This

session, like the following mindam sharing education sessions, very similarly follows after the mindam sharing educational format: (1) realizing oneself through a mindam sharing, (2) encountering God through the reflection of one's mindam with the biblical story, and (3) creating a new form of identity. Content and goal of the first session, however, differ from what will be presented in the following sessions. Whereas the next sessions deal with the hanful experiences of Korean Americans due to the Los Angeles riot and how to gain freedom from them, this first session speaks of the participants' Korean names in terms of remembrance of their cultural root, the so-called Korean/Korean-American culture. The reason to add this different educational approach in this curriculum is that it will help the participants to open themselves not only to others in the classroom but also to the concerns of the Korean-American immigration history and Los Angles riot experiences. Therefore, it can be considered that this first session may serve as an introduction to the entire curriculum. The second session, a sort of preparation for going into the following sessions, will make the Korean Americans look back on their immigration history and realize who they are and in what situation they live in the United States. The third and last session will be examples of mindam sharing education in relation to the *remembrance* of the Los Angeles riot of 1992. These sessions will directly touch the wounds of the Korean Americans and help them to transform their han to a positive identity.

The last thing to mention here is that each session is designed with the same format: purpose, preparation, setting, music, opening prayer, introducing the theme, studying the theme, introducing the Story/Vision, sharing what I have learned from the session, and closing. The sharing activity of stories is very essential in mindam sharing education. No mindam sharing education exists without the sharing activity of the

participants' stories. Therefore, the reader may recognize how each session involves this kind of sharing—that is what makes it mindam sharing education. The reader will also recognize that the three hopes of mindam sharing education are embodied in the session design—1) the realization of oneself happens in the introducing and studying of the theme; 2) the encounter of God takes place in introducing the Story/Vision; and 3) the creation of a new form of identity occurs in the “what I have learned from the session” part. The reader also see that the design is modeled after Thomas Groome's pedagogical method. Groome has five steps: naming present action, introducing the participant's stories and visions, introducing the Christian community Story/Vision, dialectical hermeneutic between the Story and participant's story, and dialectical hermeneutic between the Vision and participant's visions. These five steps are within the design in the following ways. First, naming present action and introducing the participant's stories and visions are manifested in introducing and studying the theme of the design. Second, introducing the Christian community Story/Vision equals introducing the Story/Vision. Last, dialectical hermeneutic between the Story/Vision and participants' stories/visions is embodied in the what I have learned from the session part of the mindam sharing curriculum design.

Examples of Mindam Sharing Education

The First Session: “Naming My Name”

- 1) Purpose: Throughout this project, Korean/Korean-American roots are emphasized for the establishment of a positive identity in the minds of Korean Americans who live in the discriminatory American society. In relation to the stress, this session will provide an educational example leading Korean Americans to their roots through remembering the meaning of their Korean (native) names.

- 2) Preparation: crayons, thick paper, and background music.
- 3) Setting: Arrange the tables of the participants in a circle and put some pieces of paper and crayons for each participant on the tables.
- 4) Music: “Jesus, My Savior”² will be played during the preparation time.
- 5) Opening prayer: “Compassionate and caring God, we ask you for the opening of ourselves to you and others in this time. We pray in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”
- 6) Introducing the theme: The participants will make their name tag written in Korean (if the participants neither have their Korean names nor know the Korean alphabet, let them write their American names in English on the tags). After the name tags are completed, I will introduce the participants to the cruel Japanese policy of name change against the Korean people in the Japanese colonial era.³ I will ask the participants to share their feelings or reactions to the Japanese policy. The introduction of this painful story of Korean people will serve not only to teach the importance of their names to the participants but also to teach Korean history to the Korean Americans, who are not familiar with the history of their ancestors.

² Myung Hee Song, “Jesus, My Saviour,” in Korean-English Hymnal, ed. Kyung Sun Kim (Seoul: Yeoun Publishing Co., 1988), 630.

³ As a police of cultural domination, Japan deleted Korean history and culture from school curriculum and forced the Korean people to learn the Japanese spirit and culture. Neither were Korean text books allowed in school, nor the use of the Korean language, the so-called Hangul, in public. Japan propagated that Korean people were brothers and sisters because they came from the same ancestors, and forced the Korean people to learn Japanese history and to swear allegiance to the Japanese Emperor. In 1940, Japan announced that all Koreans should change their first and last names to Japanese style names. Therefore, the Korean people lost their language and finally their Korean names, too.

- 7) Studying the theme: The participants are invited to share the meaning of their own Korean names (see what my name is and what it has meant to me in the second chapter, pp. 38-39). All participant are encouraged to share their name givers and the philosophies embraced in their names.
- 8) Introducing the Story/Vision: Genesis 17:1-8, 15-16
 - What was Abraham's old name?
 - What were the differences between the meaning of Abram and that of Abraham?
 - What were the meanings of Sarai and Sarah?
 - Why did God change their names and how did they react to God's request?
 - How did their new names affect their life journey?
 - Did they live their lives later as the new names indicated?
- 9) Sharing what I have learned from the session: The participants will discuss how they are going to put the philosophies of their names in practice during their immigration journey in the United States.
- 10) Closing: Sing "Tell Me the Old, Old Story" (Korean hymnal #236) and close the session with a closing prayer.

The Second Session: "God Called Me Out into the Wilderness"

- 1) Purpose: The participants will thank God for calling them out into the United States.
- 2) Preparation: pens, paper, world map, picture of the Israelites' wilderness journey, and music equipment. The reader should be acquainted with the history of Korean-American immigrant history before the session.

- 3) Setting: The world map and the detail map of Korean peninsula are attached on the wall. The copies of the world map will be prepared on the table for each participant. Some pieces of paper and crayons will be prepared on the table arranged in a circle.
- 4) Music: Background music is played during the preparation time.
- 5) Opening prayer: One of the participants is asked to pray.
- 6) Introducing the theme: I will tell the Korean-American immigrant history to the participants briefly (The first and second chapters of this project will be used for reference). The world map and the detail map of the Korean peninsula on the wall will be used for the sake of the participants' geographical understanding. This introduction of Korean-American immigrant history will help the participants to study their own family history of immigration. After the Korean-American immigrant history is introduced, the participants will be asked to trace with a line their immigration journeys on the world map which is already distributed on the table.
- 7) Studying the theme: On the basis of the drawing, the participants are asked to tell the histories of their family immigration. They are asked to share what brought them to the United States. However, they are free to share either joyful or bad experiences during their journey.
- 8) Introducing the Story/Vision: Genesis 11:27-32, 12:1-20
 - Where did Abram's family live before they departed for the Canaan land?
 - Why and at what age did Abram leave Haran?

- How did Abram respond to God's command to leave?
- Was it easy for Abram to leave his home and relatives?
- When God's command was given to him, what kinds of blessings were given to Abram in the future?
- Find out and trace the line of Abram's immigration journey after leaving Haran.
- Why did Abram go down to Egypt?
- Why did he lie that Sarai was his sister?
- With whose help did Abram rescue himself and his wife from Pharaoh?

9) Sharing what I have learned from the session: Immigration is never an easy task because it brings no guarantee of happiness to the immigrant. It was certainly risky for Abram and Sarai. The journey of Abram's immigration proved it. Before his departure for Canaan land, Abram knew many difficulties awaited him in the future because he had already experienced them during his family's immigration from Ur to Haran. Why did Abram take the risky journey toward Canaan land? The participants will give various responses to the question. However, the final answer sought in this session is that *God called Abram out into the wilderness and Abram obeyed God's command*. On the other hand, in terms of a hermeneutic interpretation of Korean-American immigrant history, the Korean-American immigrant journey in the United States will be understood as a pilgrimage in the wilderness, the United States. Therefore, at the end of this session, the participants will be convinced that Korean Americans are called by God into the United States.

10) Closing: Sing “I Can Hear My Savior Calling” (Korean hymnal #360) and close the session with a closing prayer.

The Third Session: “Is God among Us or Not?”

- 1) Purpose: The participants will encounter God in the *hanful* life experiences in the American society.
- 2) Preparation: newspaper articles and photos of 4.29 riots, copies of What I Remember about the Riot from the children of Los Angles, a rock, and background music.
- 3) Setting: The wall is decorated with newspapers and photos of the 4.29 riot. A rock is set on the front table.
- 4) Music: Begin the session with playing the songs of 4.29 (if possible).
- 5) Opening prayer: One of the participant is asked to lead the opening prayer.
- 6) Introducing the theme: The copies of What I Remember about the Riot from the Children of Los Angles⁴ is distributed to the participants to read.

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| <p>I remember when we had the riots and when all the people were hurt. I remember when the people w[e]re looting shops and stores, restaurants, and markets. All those things were because of Rg. Danny. Then because of Rodney King. I just hope those things don't happen again. <i>14 years of age, Korean, 7th grade, Berendo</i></p> | <p>What I remember of last years riot was that they were fighting because the Rodney King beating. There was chaos every were I saw violence. Lots of people got hurt & everybody thought it was the end of the world. All most all the buildings were burnt down & stuff was stolen. All the people were against each other. <i>13 years of age, Korean, 7th grade, Berendo</i></p> |
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⁴ Diane Kenney and Aracely Genidara, eds., What I Remember about the Riot from the Children of Los Angeles (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, United Ministry, 1993), 43, 47, 140, 172. (Permission given to reproduce for educational purposes.)

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| <p>There was a lot of racist violence going on. Vandalism was all over the cities done by we should all-races. I feel that I don't like it because we should all get along no matter what color we are. We all have feelings and came from the same place so we need to combine as one and unite.</p> <p><i>14 yrs of age, Japanese, 9th grade, Lakewood</i></p> | <p>The thing I remember most about last spring's civil unrest was the terrified face of many business owners, the burning of many buildings, the whites being cautious around south central L.A. The police force were in shields and armed with weapons, many ignorant and selfish people looking in stores just to get free stuff.</p> <p><i>17 years of age, Asian, 11th grade, Yordan</i></p> |
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After reading the copies, the participants are invited to share their feelings about the reactions of the children to the Los Angeles riot.

- 5) Studying the theme: The story of Shin Dal Kang (see pp. 95-96) is told to the participants. The participants are asked to tell the reason that the father, the so called "a good Christian," committed a suicide. The participants are led to share what they have known about the story of the father and the story of his son after his return. The story of Shin Dal Kang is so vivid and well-known to Korean Americans that it will help the participants to connect themselves to the event of Los Angeles riot immediately. Therefore, the mindam of Shin Dal Kang will serve to remind the participants of the riot and lead them to sharing their painful memories of the riot. After sharing their experiences of the riot, the participants will be encouraged to point out the elements of discrimination practiced in American society and to talk about the ways in which those elements are discriminatory.
- 6) Introducing the Story/Vision: "Water from the Rock" (Exodus 17:1-7)

- Where did the Israelites camp? How far was the camping place from the Promised Land?
- Why did the Israelites cry out?
- Why was Moses distressed by the request of the people?
- What should be the role of Moses for the people in the desert?
- Of what did Moses complain to God?
- How did God's respond to Moses' complaint and to the request of the people?
- Through the miracle of the drawing out water from a rock, what did God want Moses and the people to know?
- What did "I will stand there" (v. 6a) mean to Moses and to the people in the situation?
- What does "Meribah" mean?

Pointing to the line on the map of the wilderness route of the Israelites, I will tell the participants about the wilderness journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Rephidim. The central theme of this biblical story is God's presence with the Israelites throughout the entire wilderness journey in spite of the environmental difficulties and the misunderstandings among the people.

- 9) Sharing what I have learned from the session: The participants are encouraged to share their experiences of encountering God through the times of despair. My role as a leader is to relate the sufferings of the people of Israel in the wilderness to the discomforts of the Korean Americans in the United States. The final message looked for in this session is that the participants will come to consider discriminatory happenings in the American society as not only negative things that

are always harmful to them but also as something that can be positively transformed in something good to their lives when we encounter the God who is with us, suffers with us, and goes with us to the sublimation stage.

- 10) Closing: Sing “Standing on the Promises” (Korean hymnal #399) and close the session with a closing prayer.

The Fourth Session: “A New People with a New Covenant”

- 1) Purpose: In this session the participants will recognize the wilderness life as the place that they create a new form of identity leading them to a positive life during their immigration pilgrimage in the United States.
- 2) Preparation: A map of the wilderness route of the Israelites, color papers, pens, crayons and background music.
- 3) Setting: The map of the wilderness route of the Israelites is attached on the wall. The photos of the riot are attached on the wall.
- 4) Music: Background music, “I Am A Pilgrim,” composed by an anonymous person.
- 5) Opening prayer: One of the participants is asked to lead the opening prayer
- 6) Introducing the theme: After all participants make tablets, they color them with crayons and write the Ten Commandments on them.
- 7) Studying the theme: The stories of Shan Yul Chang and Jinnie Hah are introduced to the participants.

The First Story:

4.29 was Mr. and Mrs. Chang’s 25th Anniversary. Because of Loto sales, Sham Yul Chang used to remain at his gas station until 8 p.m. on Wednesday. However, that day was exceptional. He had not had a chance to celebrate special remembrance days [since he immigrated to the United States]. He worked hard

and finally owned two Chevron gas stations. He had never doubted that proper pay-back is guaranteed for honest sweat in the United States.

Remembering the American dream, he planed to celebrate the 25th anniversary with his faithful wife and three children at hill top restaurant. However, an extremely urgent ring broke his dream. "Mr. Chang, they are coming . . ." With this short message, his Mexican employee hung up the phone. He tried to go to his station, but his family's strong resistance kept him from going out. The foot steps of the mob coming toward his station and the broken sound of windows prevented him from sleeping. He could not get a wink all night. [He went to the station in the early morning and saw the total ruin of the station.] Everything was taken away. Even tax report forms and the time cards of 17 employees were burnt out.

He began recalling his 27-year-immigration time. He came to study in the United States in January, 1965. . . . Two years later he married a well educated woman who graduated from Iwha Women University [a very well-known university in Korea] and had the first child. They worked hard and did not come home until midnight. Because of the hard work, his wife became sick. They began realizing that their dream to return to Korea with a doctoral diploma had to be given up. However, they did not stop working diligently and honestly. They had two and three jobs a day, saved money and opened a gas station in 1969. "Better Service. Better Price. Better Product" was his philosophy. He educated employees to be kind to the customers and treat them as kings. He spent 23 years with the gas station.

Looking around the mobbed station, Kyung Ah, his oldest girl (USC), urged him to leave the place. "Let's sell our house and my car, and don't come here anymore. It is not a worthy place to stay. The sweat and tears that mom and dad had shed are too great a loss. . . ."

He said, "I try to change my anger to sympathy for the mob because I remember the hungry time of 6.25 [the Korean War in 1947-50]. I think the mobsters are the victims of racial discrimination in this society." He faithfully carried out his duties as an American citizen, but had never asked for his rights because there was no doubt that equal rights and benefits were guaranteed to his children who were born in the United States. "However, I cannot have trust in equality for all in this society. I worry that our children will not be accepted in the American mainstream because of the difference of skin color."

"For 27 years in the past, my business was not always going well. However, whenever I had faced several difficulties in the past, my faith became the source to overcome. We don't know what the Absolute One plans for us yet. [However, what I believe is] God allows us a temptation that we can overcome."⁵ Despair and anger still remain in him, but he believes that he will come back soon.⁵

⁵ Sae Hoon Park, "Crushed the Twenty-Seven-Dream and Sweat," Hankook Ilbo [Korean Times], 9 May 1993, C1.

The second story:

Jinnie Hah immigrated to Hawaii in March, 1972 and moved to Los Angeles 5 years later. She obtained citizenship and invited her relatives to the United States. Jinnie, who came to Hawaii with \$20, worked at tailor stores, restaurants and finally undertook a liquor store which became the main economic source for her family. The store is not a mere liquor store for her, but her life itself.

However, the store, located at 490 N. Allen Avenue, in Pasadena, was burnt out during the riot, and her family became the victims of the riot and became unable to pay the monthly mortgage. She dialed the Chamber of Commerce in Pasadena for help but gained nothing except the numbers of public relief services. She became hopeless.

At that time, she had her first contact with the Korean-American community during her 20- year-immigration period. "I had forgotten that I was Korean for a long time, for I was busy surviving in the American community." She realized that the first persons who came to the victims of the riot with help were Korean Americans. She knocked on the doors of the 4.29 Riot Victims Associations run by Korean Americans. She began attending a Korean-American church, where she made a first visitation and became an active member of the church. She joined the choir of the church.

Besides the active participation in the church, she diligently asked a municipal assemblyman of Pasadena to help her to lease a liquor store space and finally leased a store space from the building owner with the help of the City of Pasadena. She was also approved for a \$250,000 loan from the federal government. She renovated the space and opened a new liquor store 8 months after the riot. When she opened the new store on December 21, 1992, many of her old customers came to share the joy with her.⁶

The participants are invited to mention their feelings from hearing the two stories and to share the way that they came out from bad memories of the riot. In fact, these two stories serve to point out that the Los Angeles riot of 1992 was the worst experience of Korean Americans in the American society. That is, the event of the riot was interpreted as complete despair. The American dream, will, and trust were totally ruined, as Shan Yul Chang felt. However, the story of Jinnie

⁶ Suk Chang Chung, "Because of the Living Place Devoted the Prime Time of Life," Hankook Ilbo [Korean Times], 29 Apr. 1993, S3.

Hah tells us that there is something happening to the despairing Korean Americans. That something is a tireless will for recovery. That is a power that has been built in the minds of Korean/Korean Americans through the various difficulties that they have experienced and overcome throughout their long history.

8) Introducing the Story/Vision: Exodus 19:1-20:26

- Where did the Israelites camp?
- Where is Mt. Sinai located?
- How far is it from the Promised Land?
- Why did Moses take his people to Mt. Sinai?
- Before God made the Israelites God's chosen people, what order did God give to the people?
- What was Moses given from God on Mt. Sinai?

The main message for this part is as follows: Mt. Sinai was a very far-off place from the Promised Land. In fact, the Promised Land was located in the north, yet the people were led to the south, while they had suffered from extreme thirst and hunger. They were completely exhausted when they reached Mt. Sinai. Therefore, it can be said that Mt. Sinai was the worst place in the journey for the Israelites before they established a covenant with God. However, at the worst place, God appeared to the hopeless and exhausted people and made a covenant with them. From that moment, the people were called the people of God, the children of God. The worst place became the happiest. The curse turned to the blessing. Sorrow and disappointment were transformed to joy and hope.

Similarly to the event of Mt. Sinai for the Israelites, the 4.29 Riot of 1992, the worst hanful experience of Korean Americans, is understood as something meaningful and hopeful for the Korean Americans. In fact, the Korean Americans suffered from various forms of discrimination in the American society and finally lost their properties and dreams during the riot. The stories of Shan Yul Chang and Jinnie Hah prove that. However, that is not all. There is something that remained for the Korean Americans. That is an indomitable spirit of the Korean Americans for recovery. The spirit is never cut off because it has been inherited by the Korean/Korean Americans throughout their history. We can see the spirit from the stories of Shan Yul Chang and Jinnie Hah. The spirit is a gift from God for the people.

The Korean Americans were not the only victims of the riot, but God too. As God was with the Israelites along in the wilderness and at the worst place, Mt. Sinai, God was with the Korean Americans who suffered from the riot. God was in the midst of the pain of the enhanned. However, God does not want Korean Americans to remain in despair forever. God wants the people to transform the tragedy to an opportunity to seek God. As God ordered Moses, the mediator between God and the Israelites, to come up to Mt. Sinai, God invites the Korean Americans to the place to meet God and to establish a covenant with God. Here we find the role of the Korean-American church. The Korean-American church, as Moses, should be the mediator between God and the people as well as the meeting place for God and the people.

9) Sharing what I have learned from the session: The participants will be divided into three groups and all groups are given these following questions:

- What are the Ten Commandments given to the Korean Americans after the experience of the riot? In other words, with what rules must the Korean Americans carry out their pilgrimage in the United States?
- Recommended guideline for making rules:
 - How do we establish relationship with God?
 - How do we establish relationship with the people in our community?
 - How do we establish relationship with the people outside our community?
- After all groups have responded to the above questions, they select the best 10 rules from their responses.
- All groups are invited to share the reasons the best 10 rules were selected and in what ways the rules are important for them to establish a right relationship with God, with the people in their community and with the people in other ethnic communities.

10) Closing: All are invited to sing “We are Bound for Canaan Land” (Korean hymnal #382) and to participate in a closing prayer by rotation.

CONCLUSION

I have discussed the history of Korean Americans and their life experiences in American society in the first and second chapters. I divided the history into two parts--from 1902 to 1945 and from 1946 to the present, and discussed the deep relationship of the church with the history and with the lives of Korean Americans. In the first chapter, I proved that American Christian missionaries played a very important role in motivating Korean immigration to the United States, and the Korean-American church became a place where Korean Americans came to share information and rested their tired bodies and souls in the first immigration period. Therefore, the church itself became indeed a shelter for the Korean Americans. The church became bigger and bigger in the Korean-American community after the Immigration and Naturalization Acts of 1965 and until now. Unfortunately, however, as the church obtained more power than most other volunteer organizations in the Korean-American community, the church turned its face away from providing a shelter for Korean Americans. The unjust economic and political affairs against the powerless Korean Americans became no longer concerns of the church. The church was busy increasing its membership and making its buildings bigger and more splendid.

In contrast to the separation of the church from economic and political affairs, I consistently stressed that the Korean-American church should embrace the pains of the Korean Americans with its heart and cure them. The church is called to struggle with/for the enhanced Korean Americans and to provide them a way to overcome the unjust affairs and create a positive life in American society. I challenged the church to create new theological and educational understandings of its task in the community. There are three

tasks of the church: the first is to embrace the wounds of immigrants due to the unjust economic and political discrimination in American society and due to the L.A. Riot of 1992; the second is to have them take them to a positive view for their hanful experiences through han theology on the Arirang-gogae and mindam sharing education; the last is to solve a pending question in the Korean-American church: how to plant the faith of the first generation in the second and third generations of Korean-American Christians.

In the fifth chapter, I suggested a curriculum of mindam sharing education embodying in han theology on the Arirang-gogae. In the curriculum, I encouraged the Korean-American church to create a positive theological interpretation of the Los Angeles riot of 1992 and to educate the victims with mindam sharing education. There were two reasons the riot is brought into this project: first, many Korean Americans still suffer from the aftereffect of the riot; and the riot is a common ground among the first and the younger generations in that area because of its wide impact on almost all Korean-American lives, regardless of the differences in ages and genders. In the curriculum, however, although the riot was the worst experience for them, they were encouraged to transform into a new starting point that leads them to encounter God's suffering with them and going with them to the creation of a positive identity as Korean Americans in their wilderness pilgrimage.

As a concluding remark, I have to confess that this project is an incomplete work. It needs to be supplemented in many places. However, I want to leave it open-ended. I know there are hundreds of educational elements which can be helpful to complement this work in Korean/Korean-American culture and community. I want to invite everyone

interested in the church education of Korean Americans, and in this project, to complement this work.

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